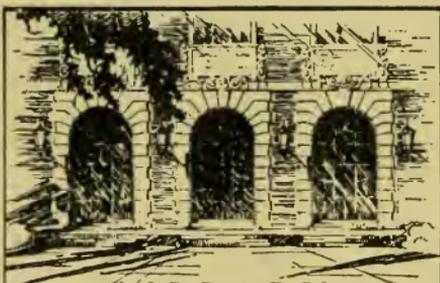


JULIET'S LOVERS



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# *Juliet's Lovers*

BY

MABEL COLLINS

AUTHOR OF

'THE PRETTIEST WOMAN IN WARSAW,' 'VIOLA FANSHAWE,'  
'A DEBT OF HONOUR,' ETC.

*'Fatal creature, bitter-sweet!'*

SAPPHO.

*IN THREE VOLUMES*

VOL. III.

LONDON

WARD & DOWNEY

12 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

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1893



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# JULIET'S LOVERS.

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## CHAPTER I.

“— a brief, keen, miraculous moment,  
Outweighs the slow torture of years!”

IT was with the feeling that she was taking a final farewell of Denvil that Juliet entered upon her work that night; there was a solemnity at her heart which took away the dreadful nervousness from which she had suffered the night before. It was probably, almost certainly, the last time she would ever see him; and her eyes dwelled lingeringly, lovingly on him when, on the stage, they were brought face to face. She knew that in her lay the courage

of a martyr; it was part of her nature. Yet she wondered, as she met his look of love, wondered at herself that she had the strength to go and leave everything that made life worth having. But, while she wondered, she knew it must be. She was incapable of cruelty; incapable of causing pain; and Linda's kisses were still on her face, Linda's words in her ears. Linda was in front, watching these two hungrily. Juliet was conscious of it, but it did not disturb her to-night. She was absorbed in the thought that this was the last time — the last time! — her voice, filled with the sadness of farewell, took so tender and soft a tone as to bring tears to the eyes of those who listened to her. Her acting was in quite a different key to-night, as many remarked who had come to see the play for the second time; and as everyone belonging to the theatre noticed

—above all, Denvil. An inexpressible sense of sadness passed from her to him; he could only marvel at it—for it was new, different from anything else he had ever experienced when with her. What did it mean? He knew not. He could only wonder. It softened his spirit, and took from it the hard anger which he had been suffering all day. He knew not whether it was pain or pleasure that passed through him now; it was like a swoon of feeling. In a dream he played his part; to himself it seemed that he was like one who talked in his sleep.

But something happened at the end of the scene which awoke him effectually.

The curtain had just fallen when there came a cry from the house—the awful cry of “Fire!” And in an instant those who stood on the stage saw that the curtain

itself was in flames. Immediately the applause changed into a roar of fear and rage as the crowd struggled to escape from danger. Everyone on the stage was gone at once, save Juliet, who stood gazing at the flames without making an effort to save herself.

Denvil had rushed up to his dressing-room, and returning down the stairs like lightning, caught sight of her standing there alone. Without a word he seized her in his arms and half carried, half dragged her out of the way of the wild flames that were already seizing on the stage.

Juliet shuddered with horror at the cries of pain and fear she heard, and seemed stupefied by her helplessness. She said afterwards that the only thing she realised was her utter inability to help any of these poor wretches, who were in

such agony—some of pain, some of sheer terror. It was indeed each one for himself! She remembered afterwards Denvil, as he dragged her away, looking into her face with a strange expression, and he said, “You are mine now—given to me!” Then he took her hand and led her through some dark passages that were quite deserted, into an obscure place that seemed to have great pieces of scenery in it. There was a window here. He threw it up and looked out. It was only a few feet from the ground. It opened into a dark side alley. No one was there. They could hear the crowd in the street, they could hear the thunder of the fire engines coming to the rescue, they could hear pieces of the building crashing in behind them. But here all was as still as the grave. Denvil sprang out lightly and then turned to her, holding out his arms. “Come!”

he said. And without a moment's hesitation she sprang to him and he caught her. For a second he held her tight, in an embrace that was almost painful—yet so sweet! "Saved," he said under his breath, "Mine." Then he took her hand and put it on his arm. "Come," he said, "we must be quick."

She made no comment. They went quickly down the dark narrow alley over the rough stones. Denvil looked from right to left, hoping to find some turning, some other alley, that led out of this. But there was none. It was necessary to plunge into the dense crowd that filled the street. It was composed of roughs and common people, all in the wildest state of excitement; by sheer force and resolution it was just possible to get through them. Denvil went first, making Juliet keep behind him; he literally forced his way through. Juliet clung to him, and he

held her tight; but her face was turned back to the burning building, her eyes fixed on that sight of horror. All faces were turned upwards, all eyes fixed on the same thing, so that Denvil and Juliet were not noticed by the wild crowd they pushed through. At last they had crossed the street. Denvil, still holding Juliet's hand tight, instantly hurried into another street. This was all dark and deserted. Everyone who could walk had rushed to look at the fire.

“Where are we going?” asked Juliet.  
“I want to know if the others are saved!”

They were passing a church with a flight of steps sheltered by a heavy portico.

“Juliet,” said Denvil, “will you sit down in the shadow of that portico and wait a few minutes for me. I am going back to hear who has been saved—to see what has happened.”

“Why do you want me to wait here?” she demanded.

“Will you do it?” he asked, “to please me.”

She hesitated. Then she said,—

“Yes; but only for a few minutes. I shall be wanted—some one is sure to be hurt—and poor old Miss Tyrell—”

He did not wait to hear what she said; but interrupted her with “I have your promise,” and rushed off.

She kept her word, mounted the steps and sat down in the shadow. She was worn out with excitement and emotion.

It was not long before Denvil returned. She rose and stepped down to meet him.

“Everyone is saved!” he said hurriedly, “but your dressing-room has fallen right in, and they think you are lost. Come, my darling—come away with me! They will believe us both dead!”

Juliet was so startled she made no answer. He drew her to him.

“Do you care enough for me to give up your life here and begin again with me in another country? A merciful Providence has freed us—will you come?”

And Juliet, thinking of how she had planned to do this very thing—but alone—felt as if indeed Providence had interfered.

“Yes,” she said, “I will come.”

He caught her hand and hurried her away.

“But does no one want me—is no one hurt?” she exclaimed after a moment of bewilderment, attempting to pause. But he hurried her on resolutely.

“No one,” he answered. “I caught sight of Miss Tyrell, and I heard all the others were safe. Two or three of the audience are badly hurt. Come quickly!”

Do not sacrifice me again to your pity for others!"

They went so swiftly that before long they were out of the town. Denvil did not rest till they were in the dark country; then he drew breath and paused.

He looked round and listened. All was dark and silent. They were alone, under the stars.

"Is it possible!" he said in a very low voice. "Am I free from her?"

He did not intend Juliet to hear these words; but she did, and she knew he spoke of Linda. Of Linda, who was left to mourn her dead! The vision of Linda's grief and despair rose before her, but she put it resolutely back. Surely a way had opened to her. Surely her happiness was given into her hand! And she did so want to be happy! All the wild craving of her youth and her love, all the hunger of her fierce young heart,

flamed out within her when she saw a way open in front of her like this. She had resolved to go—she must go—now she need not go alone! For Linda to think Denvil dead was the happiest thing that could happen to her; life with him, as Juliet herself had at last realised, must always be an agony to her now. Suddenly Juliet saw that to take Denvil from Linda absolutely, like this, was a deed of kindness, not of cruelty. A sharp grief was better than the long drawn-out pain of ceaseless jealousy. Thus she stood and thought in the dark beneath the dim stars. And when Denvil caught her to him and covered her face with kisses, she made no resistance. She was his now; yes, the struggle was over. What freedom! What joy! What sweet scents came to her on the soft night air! What a new world was this she found herself in, no longer bound to silence her heart and bid it be still! All the

bitterness she had suffered since her wedding-day seemed suddenly to drop from her. She was the bride again, the young girl full of love. The proud, stern resolution which had mastered even his will, of late, had gone from her. She was like a child, ready to obey him.

“My poor Evangeline!” he exclaimed suddenly. “Standing here in that low dress! I must not let you. I must think what to do.”

Juliet was in her stage dress—a robe of grey satin, cut half-low in the neck; she wore her mother’s pearls. Her arms were bare but for her bracelets. Her head was bare, and her satin slippers wet through; but she had not felt the cold or the damp.

And this was how Juliet Vane ran away with her own husband, to spare a guilty woman inevitable suffering, which she had called down upon herself. So vain and futile

are our noblest sacrifices in this life! But neither imagination nor experience could have suggested the profound futility of this sacrifice.

Denvil thought rapidly, talking a little as he thought. "The difficulty is, one is always so well known in these country places. I should be recognised directly in any shop. But you must have wraps. I'll risk it. Everyone will be at the fire. I shall only have to deal with some child or servant who will very likely not know me. I'll risk it. What luck I ran upstairs for my money! I had left my pocket-book on my dressing-table; but I had sense enough to save it. Dear, will you wait for me? Are you afraid? There are shops in a street close by that are not closed yet. But I dare not take you with me in that dress—you would be recognised instantly."

"I will wait," said Juliet quietly.

It was so pleasant to obey, after her long weary struggle. He turned instantly and went away with long strides which soon carried him out of sight.

Left alone Juliet fell into a dream of feeling, of emotion, so deep that she was all but unconscious, as she stood there, her hands clasped, her eyes fixed on the stars. She had no idea how long Denvil was away, and was quite startled when he came running down the road. He flung a long rough cloak round her shoulders.

“Such luck!” he exclaimed, “the shop was empty. Everyone had rushed to the fire. I took these things and left some money on the counter; and we are close to the station; there is a train signalled. Now you have that cloak we can venture in the train. Draw the hood over your head. And look, I have a straw hat! No one will notice us now—what luck!” He drew her

along with him and hurried down the road, The train was coming. Denvil took her hand and began to run. They reached the station just in time to run up the steps and jump into the train. The porters were at the fire, and the station-master, who was hurrying back from it, came up the steps behind them. As the guard banged the door Denvil called out,—“We’ve no tickets.”

“All right, sir,’ said the man, and the train was off.

## CHAPTER II.

“Drinking perilous draughts of the vintage of love.”

JULIET'S honeymoon lasted a year. To herself, afterwards, that deep draught of happiness seemed to have been but a very brief one. To others, knowing more of life, and further on in its dreary path, it may seem long indeed, long enough to make the fortunate possessor very thankful. And these two were, at the time, thankful beyond words.

So simply, and so quite without suspicion did they escape, that it seemed like a miracle to themselves.

Neither had even a tender friendship to regret, or a tie which was not readily broken for the sake of the present bliss and perfect freedom.

They went straight to Italy and wandered about, as fancy led them; in its quieter corners, revelling in beauty which was a fitting framework for their perfect happiness. The world they had left appeared to have utterly passed away from the face of the earth; in time they actually forgot it. A few days were spent in Paris, where Juliet's pearls were pledged for a sum large enough to give them this year's honeymoon without thinking about money. She would not sell them, as both dimly looked forward to a future of work and success in America or Australia, when they would be reclaimed. For the present such thoughts were dim indeed. Both possessed talent and personal appearance sufficient to ensure success in any far-off English-speaking country, without the necessity for using the old names or waking the old memories of the old life.

They travelled as Mr and Mrs Maurice ; and to all intents and purposes Maurice Denvil and Juliet Vane were indeed dead. During the few days spent in Paris they saw enough about those two persons in both the French and English papers. The hope of finding them was not given up for many days ; but at last it died out. For the side of the theatre, in which Juliet's dressing - room stood, had fallen completely in ; and it was long before the smouldering fire in it could be subdued. It was, therefore, supposed that Juliet's body had been burned to ashes, no trace of it being discovered on the most careful search. It was imagined that Denvil had attempted to save her and perished in the same manner. It was rather ghostly for these two, who looked so young, so radiant, and so happy that people turned to watch them in the streets,

to read the melancholy articles written about themselves. And Paris was unsafe—any day they might meet someone they knew. But fortune favoured them; the time necessary for purchasing a sufficient wardrobe, and for pledging the pearls passed without any *contretemps*; and perfectly free, perfectly happy, they deserted modern civilisation, and hurried away to the placid old cities which are chiefly haunted by American tourists. They managed to avoid even these by frequenting the more obscure hotels. Nothing happened to mar the golden circle of the hours. They travelled like a pair of birds, taking flight when it pleased them, resting when it pleased them, and always pleased with the same things. Denvil's superb youth returned upon him in added glory; he was more like a fawn than he had ever been. Lord Francis would have been ill

with envy could he have seen him. And Juliet's face had a light on it that made strangers sit and watch her; the light of perfect pleasure. Such absolute pleasure seems to offend some law of our life; how seldom is it granted to any, and never is it permitted to last. Time like this is not life, but an interlude in life. Those that have known such rich hours live afterwards in the hope that again may the same chords vibrate, even if but faintly. But seldom, indeed, do they recur.

No shadow of fear, no dread of the future, no faintest wearing of the present clouded the complete contentment, the absolute pleasure in which these two existed. Juliet's personality was so rich and strong, her character so bright and yet so deep, that to Denvil she was a companion such as he had never dreamed of. He had hitherto

supposed women were merely meant for love; but Juliet was a revelation to him. She loved so absolutely that she was able to open the whole flower of her nature to him, to say all her deep thought, to reveal every sparkle of fancy. Often they would sit and talk half the night, beneath the profound deep of the Italian sky, leading one another on through perplexing and delightful reaches of fancy or touching on realities of thought. Denvil had never known a woman like Juliet, whose expanding mind, opening as she stepped into womanhood, was strong and clear and full of brilliancy. Linda, with whom he had lived so long, was mindless. She was a creature of love only; she recognised no bond between man and woman but passion. Such companionship as he had now was a ceaseless delight to him, and brought out the best part of himself. As for Juliet's

contentment, the women who had worshipped at the shrine of Maurice Denvil's beauty would tell you that his charm was a final one—one that could not change. Handsome though he was, it did not lie in his beauty; he would have had the same power over women if he had been plain, ill-favoured, insignificant. We have all met with the man who is regarded with wonder because of his power with women, and who has not, apparently, a single point to recommend him. He has the mysterious gift which, in modern jargon, is called magnetic. The touch of Denvil's hand on her arm sent a subtle fire through Juliet's veins, that subtle fire that Sappho speaks of. She knew well what it was to tremble, to lose sight and hearing, to grow paler than summer grass, to lose consciousness and knowledge of heaven and earth alike, to drown in deep waters of keen pleasure

that shut out all else. How few know what such love is, the "fatal creature, bitter—sweet" that shakes the very soul in its temple. Juliet was the high-strung violin that needs the perfect touch; and it is a profound favour granted by the gods when that contact is permitted. Too often a divine instrument remains mute for lack of it. But Denvil's love made of Juliet's whole being a song, a harmony. None other could ever rouse or affect her; as Lord Francis had said of her, she could love but once.

They loitered by the sea, and boated, going over Shelley's ground; they went into the country, and spent all day and evening and half the night amid the pageantry of Italian scenery; they saw "the shepherds trample the hyacinth under foot and the flower darken on the ground." They rode together, or drove; and long

years afterwards came back to Juliet the memory of the keen, sweet air, of the flower scents, of the fresh briny odour of the sea, of the joy of the morning and the evening. Ah, the pleasure of living, and loving! What a glorious world this is for us, for one grand moment in a lifetime. The "leaning together and talking low," that makes you king and queen of pleasure, with all the great world, with its grand scenery and its vast sky, your audience chamber. You pass among its different scenes, always triumphant, always the reigning monarchs, always supreme; and the rest of the men and women, the *cidolons* who people the background, are mere outsiders, trivial persons of no account. So it was with these two; very quietly they made their royal progress, occasionally condescending to converse with the stars, sometimes admitting a rare sunset or a noble prospect

to partake of their intimacy. They did not sit and wonder at Nature; they permitted her to form their court.

Oh, the wild gallops along the sands, by the edge of the sea, with the warm sea breeze in one's face! The rides over the hills, myrtle-scented, fragrant! The idle days passed in orange groves, or loitered away in galleries and libraries!

At one place where they stayed a long while they drove together in a little basket carriage with a quick pony. Just outside the village the road passed through waving fields of grass that stood breast-high, and through which the sea-wind swept majestically. Day after day they galloped the little pony along this road for the sake of hearing the swift rush of the wind through the grass, and feeling themselves a part of it.

In such pleasures, so slight and yet so

deep, passed the golden hours that dropped away one by one unnoticed and unheeded. These sublime egoists thought as little of the passage of time as they did of the fact that other people existed in the world.

### CHAPTER III.

“This is the joy the good gods send :  
Love’s gay rhyme is older than Time is . . .  
Ah, but all must have an end !”

A DESIRE to see the glories of Rome took these two foolish people to that wonderful city, which is composed of two distinct halves—the grand past and the trivial present. The latter, personified in every sort of knowing American and complacent Britisher, walks abroad and patronisingly admires the “glory that was Rome.” If Juliet did not want to meet any of those acquaintances who knew her as Juliet Vane, she committed as great a folly as if she had entered a London drawing-room. But these two had entered so deeply into their dream-

like happiness, that they no longer thought about the past or about meeting old friends. The world they had once lived in had lost all its reality, and that any echo of it should reach them now never entered into their considerations.

But Juliet was disturbed at hearing so much English spoken on all sides. She had nothing to fear from meeting anyone who knew her, but she dimly dreaded the possible breaking of the spell under which they lived. Women usually have this dread much more keenly than men; but, nevertheless, Denvil was far too well content to want any unasked change to come into their life. When, therefore, as they were walking on the Pincio on the third day, happily revelling in the wide vision of Italy, Juliet suddenly broke upon his quiet delight by a quick whisper,—“Look the other way; there is someone who

knows us close at my side," he obeyed her instantly. Both became more intently absorbed in the view than ever, and apparently noticed none of the well-dressed cosmopolitan crowd they moved amongst. They walked on like this for some minutes, until Denvil felt it safe to say,—

“Who was it?”

“I should not have thought of meeting him of all people in the world,” exclaimed Juliet with disgust. “It was Dr Pynton Clifford walking with *such* a pretty woman! But he saw us.”

“Bother!” said Denvil. “We had better go away. Shall we pack up and start for Orvieto? It’s much too quiet there for him to be likely to turn up.”

“Yes,” agreed Juliet at once.

This was how all their plans were made. One or the other proposed something, and it was practically settled without further dis-

cussion. On this occasion Juliet assented with particular eagerness, and they immediately walked down from the Pincio to their hotel, without one glance back at that ghost from the dead past, which had appeared to them in the full glow of the warm Roman sunshine.

Dr Pynton Clifford, on the contrary, arrested his companion's progress on some pretext or other, put up his glass, and surveyed the figures of the retreating couple with immense interest.

"Who'd have thought it!" he exclaimed at last.

"Thought what? What has happened?" asked the lady, much puzzled by this eccentricity on the part of a cavalier usually so devoted.

"I've just seen two people who are popularly supposed to be dead," explained the doctor, "for whom much mourning has

been worn, and many tears shed, and they look about as much alive as any two people I have seen for a long time. Upon my word! So she cheated us all, and ran away with that pretty fellow. Fancy giving up such a career as hers for the prettiest fellow in the world! What fools women are—excuse the sentiment—*some* women I should say.”

“Oh, but you are perfectly right,” said the lady. “Where men are concerned women are very foolish. So this was a love affair? An elopement? Why did they elope and pretend to be dead?”

“That’s a great deal more than I can guess,” said the doctor, “but it seems to have been a good idea. She’s more beautiful than ever.”

His companion was so consummately pretty that she could well afford to hear another woman praised, or Dr Pynton

Clifford would not have risked the remark. He had dévoted himself to the *crème de la crème* among pretty women for so long a life that he knew all their ways. A real beauty takes it as a compliment when another woman is admired in her presence. It shows her assured eminence. It is the woman who is uncertain of her own charms that eats her heart out with jealousy.

“It was that lovely creature that we met a moment ago,” exclaimed the lady. “Why, doctor, who is she? I know her face quite well. An actress! Yes, I’m sure of it, an actress. It was Juliet Vane!” she cried triumphantly. “I remember all about her death. What a terrible affair it was! Everybody cried, and we were as gloomy as if one of the Royalties had died, and all the while she was alive, and as happy as possible. What a wretch to cheat us

so! And who was the man? I didn't see his face."

"I never saw but one man with that lithe figure and light walk," said the doctor, who seemed rather gloomy. "Didn't you recognise him without seeing his face. I did."

"Why, yes! Maurice Denvil! Oh, what wretches! Why his widow was mad for some time, wasn't she? How odd we should meet them like that."

It is not necessary to know this lady's name. She was only one of the long procession of beautiful women with whom the beauty-loving doctor walked and talked. She had a great many friends, and a vast correspondence, and the next day, when she was writing letters, she mentioned to two or three people that "the wonderful Juliet Vane was not dead at all, for she had met her walking on the Pincio with Maurice

Denvil, who was not dead either. The wretches had only run away from his poor wife" This was followed in most of the letters by an expression of horror at the wickedness of some women.

Meantime, Denvil and Juliet went off to Orvieto, and soon forgot their momentary alarm. The past to them seemed dead, beyond recall. Surely no one now would even be interested to know that they lived. This was how they unconsciously argued, being so little interested themselves in these other persons with whom they did not happen to be in love.

Orvieto is quiet and small, and so high among the clouds, that one would expect to be at peace there. But the English tourist usually visits the grand "Resurrection" in its chapel, and even the most art-loving of English travellers has a tend-

ency to read the *Daily Telegraph* and other such journals from time to time. Denvil and Juliet had lived so long out of the everyday world and so little for it, that they had entirely lost the newspaper habit, and never bought an English paper. But one day, coming in tired from a long ramble, Juliet sat down in the coffee-room of the hotel, and idly took up a newspaper which had been left on the table by a passing traveller, and glanced over it.

Coming in a few minutes later, Denvil found her sitting like one turned to stone, gazing at the newspaper in her hand. He addressed her, but she did not answer him. She was (for the first time since their marriage) so lost in thought, as not to notice his presence. He took the newspaper from her, and looked at it. This was what he saw:—

“London has been electrified by the discovery that Juliet Vane and Maurice Denvil, who were supposed to be burned in the fire at the — Theatre a year ago, and who were mourned by the whole nation, simply ran away, and are living together on the Continent. The reason for this extraordinary disappearance appears to have been partly that Mrs Denvil and Miss Vane were friends, and Miss Vane had sufficient scruples of conscience to prevent her carrying on her intrigue with Maurice Denvil before his wife’s eyes; and partly that she was involved in a very disgraceful business speculation, which, we fear, a magistrate would call by the harder name of swindling. It appears that Juliet Vane started a shop in Bond Street for modes, confections, jewellery, and all the pretty things that ladies buy. Her position gave her practically limitless credit, and this was made use of unscrupulously. The shop in Bond Street was crowded with valuable articles, bought at houses where Miss Vane had credit, and, of course, not paid for. This fact was discovered afterwards; the tradesmen who supplied these goods believing them to be for Miss Vane’s personal use. Mr Ferguson, the jeweller in Regent Street, has lost heavily over the affair, and is now so enraged at the manner in which he has been cheated, that he has instructed the police to discover Miss Vane and arrest her. On hearing the news of the actress’s death, applications were made at her house, when for the first time the tradesmen learned

that all the goods had been sent to the shop in Bond Street. This was found to be closed. Worse followed—when searched, it was found to be absolutely empty. Miss Vane had found some means of removing everything, and by this method of realising a very agreeable little fortune. It is an open secret that Lord Francis Ellerton is Miss Vane's father, and the warmest sympathy is felt with his lordship in respect to this disgraceful affair, especially as it has come to light just after the announcement of his lordship's approaching marriage with a lady well known in society, who possesses the united charms of wealth, position, and great personal attractions."

"What an extraordinary farrago of nonsense!" exclaimed Denvil, as soon as he had read through the paragraph.

"Her name is not even mentioned," said Juliet, looking at him, but evidently not seeing him.

"Whose name? What on earth are you talking about?" cried Denvil.

"Victoria Elwood," answered Juliet. "I never ordered any of those things. I did not know they *were* ordered; and as to

their disappearance, I can only conclude she went off with the things directly she heard of my death. Oh, the wicked woman; why did she not return them?"

"Then you did open a shop?" demanded Denvil, who heard of all this for the first time, and was perfectly amazed and bewildered.

"Victoria Elwood did. She asked me to help her start, when I told her I did not want her to travel with me."

"And you let her have the use of your name and your credit?"

"I let her use my name, because she said the landlord would not let to her as she was unknown. So she persuaded me to sign the lease. I did not mind that, as I knew I could always pay the rent for her if necessary; but she said it would not be necessary. As to my credit, I know nothing of that. I suppose she ordered the

things as if for me, at the shops where she was in the habit of going with me."

"Well!" exclaimed Denvil, "you have certainly made a pretty mess of it."

"It seems so," answered Juliet, and relapsed into thought. The whole thing was so new to her she was busy thinking it out.

Denvil walked up and down the room once or twice, also busy thinking it out. But presently he stopped in front of her,—

"Come," he exclaimed, "we must pack up and be off. We are too near Rome, where we were seen. It's very unpleasant, but I believe you can be arrested in another country for this sort of thing, and we shall soon have the police here. Where shall we go?"

"I am going to London," Juliet answered simply.

"To London?" he echoed in amazement.  
"You will be arrested at once."

"Never mind," she said, "I will tell all the truth, and ask for time. I will go back to the stage and pay off the debts by degrees."

"No one will believe a word you say," said Denvil.

"But they must, if I tell nothing but the truth," she answered indignantly.

Such a speech will show the reader how innocent, how ignorant, was Juliet Vane still.

"I must go and face it all," she went on, her colour rising, her eyes flashing. "I will not be supposed to be hiding for a crime I never committed. Come, Maurice, help me—let us go! We won't wait for the police; we'll save them the trouble of coming here!"

She rose from her chair as she spoke.

“What nonsense!” said Denvil, rather sullenly. “You go back to be sneered at and cut; for I tell you no one will believe your story. At the best, you will have to work like a slave for years, to pay debts you have not contracted. Nonsense. Let us make tracks and get quit of it all.”

“This is not worthy of you, Maurice,” said Juliet, with quiet dignity.

Without saying any more she went away to her own room. Denvil, following her in a few minutes, found her busy packing up. With an expression of disgust, he began to follow her example.

“So you really mean it?” he demanded, pausing once to address her again. “You are going to show fight?”

“I am not going to run away,” she answered, resolutely, “and I am not going to hide, now that it is known I am alive.”

“You always were a hopeless Don Quixote,” said Denvil, discontentedly.

He did not know how he would be received in his old haunts; he did not know what stand to take when back among his old acquaintances; and he would much rather have not had the ordeal. However, the idea of not accompanying Juliet never occurred to him; she was part of himself.

“We’ll go to a good sharp lawyer directly we get to London,” he said, “and see how to get you out of this scrape. By Jove, though, there’ll be Heywood to reckon with too. Juliet, don’t be wrong-headed and obstinate this time. Remember, that if you had done what I wished, and openly acknowledged our marriage, none of this infernal bother would have happened.”

Juliet did not answer immediately. For the first time since they had been together

she was afraid to speak, lest she should regret her words afterwards. After a few moments she said,—

“I see now that I have been very foolish ; but it is not too late to set the wrong right.”

“Oh, yes, it is,” said Denvil. “That sort of thing is never any good. It doesn't matter what you do or say, or how you slave, you will always be called a swindler.”

## CHAPTER IV.

“ I am the Queen Phasiphae.”

“ A worthless woman ; mere cold clay,  
As all false things are.”

FROM this day the colour of Juliet's life changed. Hitherto she had lived as only poets and great artists can live, triumphantly. Her beauty and genius had given her sufficient power to overcome such dark experiences as she had encountered. Her spirit had been tarnished a little, but not broken. No blow heavy enough had fallen on it for that ; and the intensity of her love-dream had so brightened all her path that she saw not the weeds by the way.

But it was all different now.

It was the end of November. Certainly a less agreeable month in which to return to

one's native land—supposing it to be England—can scarcely be thought of. But the heavy fog under which the island lay when the boat which carried Juliet and Denvil arrived at Dover was not enough to account for the weight of dread that fell upon her. The journey into London was terrible to these two, who had so long been wandering from one sunny country to another—for let me say, that though a year is a little space in a lifetime, a year of love and sunshine is long enough to spoil the people who have enjoyed it for anything less agreeable. Denvil's spirits sank completely as they steamed into the black darkness of a London fog; and the two sat silently in the railway carriage looking out of opposite windows. Presently Denvil made a remark.

“Just imagine!” he said, reflectively; “I used to suppose it was impossible to live anywhere but in London.”

Juliet said nothing. She looked out into the fog, and heartily wished herself away in sunny Italy. The darkness seemed to her a very bad omen; a superstitious feeling fell upon her, a sense that she was returning into a cloud of trouble as thick and heavy as the fog that lay upon the great weary town.

They went to an hotel and tried to shake off the depressing influences of their gloomy arrival. After dinner, Denvil suddenly said,—

“Suppose we go to the theatre?”

“Yes! yes!” exclaimed Juliet, her eyes kindling with the old fire.

“Why not, indeed?” went on Denvil. “It may be your last night of freedom. We will enjoy it. Let us study the paper and see what is going on. Upon my word, not much change in a year! Two new plays—but the names of the authors and

actors are enough — one knows what they are without seeing them. By Jove! Heywood is running a comic opera! He must have been hard hit over our little affair. A new piece at the 'Criterion.' We'll go there."

In five minutes they were driving off in a hansom.

How strange it seemed to be back in the old familiar atmosphere, the air heavy with gas and with divers perfumes, instead of the scent of asphodel and the smell of the wild, fresh sea; the grand toilets, and the painted, powdered faces. As they took their places in the stalls, Denvil noticed a host of opera-glasses directed upon Juliet. He supposed she was recognised; but after a glance at the faces of those who were so interested in her he saw it was not so. It was sheer admiration that made them look at her so intently. And Denvil himself

gave her a searching look, which she caught and was puzzled by. Yes, he thought, she is more lovely than ever. The year of perfect peace and perfect happiness had given her face a radiant expression which lent it a new charm, and the free, out-of-door life they had led had made her complexion a glory. She had a peach-like, velvet bloom that made her look like a fresh wild-flower brought into this heated atmosphere, with the dew of the hills and woods still upon it.

A pang of jealousy stabbed Denvil as he saw the attention she attracted. He knew that their love was about to undergo a fiery ordeal. Juliet was perfectly unconscious. Her singleness of heart and purpose made her so. Denvil was cast in a different, nay, in an opposite, mould. This of course, or the attraction between them would not have been so overpowering.

They were rather late, and took the last two stalls. The house was full, when they entered, of the usual well-dressed, well-pleased, laughter-loving Criterion audience; only one box was empty—a stage-box. Denvil scrutinised the whole house; not one face he knew! This always seems such an odd circumstance when, for the first time after a long absence, one enters an assemblage of one's own country-people. With a sigh, half of regret and half of relief, he set himself to look at the stage. But presently his attention was distracted by the entrance of a late arrival into the empty stage-box.

“Here's someone we know,” he whispered to Juliet.

She looked, and smiled involuntarily with amusement; for the lady who had come into the box, apparently alone, had caught sight of them at the same instant that

they noticed her, and stood for a moment as one transfixed. The recognition had been instantaneous and mutual. As this lady was very well known, and on this occasion had achieved a very wonderful toilette, the house supposed, naturally enough, that she was posing for admiration, and gave her abundance of it. When she entered, she was robed entirely in a long mantle of rich black silk; some heavy black lace covered her head and fell to her feet in front. She had thrown off the lace, and was just throwing off the mantle, when she caught sight of Denvil and Juliet; and she stood for a moment in that attitude to stare at them. Her dress was entirely composed of filmy white lace that fell like a veil over her figure, which was literally sheathed in white satin. On her hair was a small wreath of little white roses.

“By Jove!” said Denvil, appreciatively,

“that’s very effective. Juliet, you must have a dress like that; you would look divine in it. The Fairweather looks old, and as if she needed fresh air.”

This spoken from the lofty height of a man who has had a long holiday.

“The Fairweather,” known to the public as Mrs Felix Fairweather, recovered herself after a very slight pause, handed her cloak to an invisible companion at the back of the box, and sat down. She had a bouquet of white flowers, and a huge white feather fan. She laid them both on the cushion of the box, and simply sat and gazed at the two who had returned from the dead. Her sight was excellent, and she did not affect the use of opera-glass or lorgnette. Indeed, she was unconventional in all she did; the unconventionality was a good deal studied, it is true. She was an actress, extraordinarily successful. Her success was

extraordinary because she had none of the qualifications supposed to be necessary for a stage career. She had neither youth, beauty, nor genius. Talent she had, and the gift of fascination. She was extremely thin, tall and angular; her face was faded, and had never been beautiful at its best. But there was something in the heavily-lidded eyes, in the lines of the large sensual mouth, which many men thought infinitely more attractive than fresh beauty. She had learned, too, to use her thin figure with subtle art, and wherever she entered, whether a room or on the stage, she took attention away from even the most beautiful women. If rumour spoke true, she was a living instance of the saying, that the wicked flourish like a green bay-tree. She was always lucky; and she had a terrible reputation. For man or woman to acknowledge the acquaintance of Mrs Felix

Fairweather was, to the respectably-minded, much like exhibiting the hall-mark of Satan himself. And yet Mrs Felix Fairweather was a very gentle, "soft-spoken lady," as the servants say, and no one would suppose she was capable of harming a fly, much less of luring men and women into the regions of eternal fire. It is not too much to say that in spite of her extreme gentleness of demeanour she absolutely gloried in her terrible character. She loved to see women shrink from her, and even men look nervous in her neighbourhood. For hers was not the ordinary evil reputation of a fast woman. She was supposed to destroy the souls of men and women.

Such was the first acquaintance Denvil and Juliet encountered. Of course both knew her slightly, as all theatrical people know each other; but neither had ever seen

more of her than was involved in chance professional encounters.

After the first moment's surprise she smiled and nodded; and both smiled and bowed in return. Then she turned and addressed her invisible companion.

“Do you see them actually sitting calmly there in the stalls?” she demanded in a whisper. “Maurice Denvil and Juliet Vane. They have come to life as coolly as possible. And how sunburnt they are! He is handsomer than ever. How I wish I could take him with me to Australia! That's the man I want. Do go and fetch him round for me. I must talk to him.”

“You can't take him without her,” answered the invisible person, taking no notice of her request. “And I don't suppose you would care for that. She, too, is handsomer than ever.”

“So you have seen them? How can you, sitting back there?”

“I saw them at the first glance, the instant I came into the box.”

“You are wonderfully quick,” said the Fairweather reflectively, “and yet you don’t look it. I believe you are much cleverer than you like people to fancy. How odd! I am obliged to cultivate a reputation for being cleverer than I am. But then you were born at the top of the tree. So you think I can’t take him without her? I must admit she is lovely. I am not good-looking, and I don’t in the least mind other women being so. And you won’t fetch Denvil for me? I remember now, you fought a duel with him about that girl. Well, I’ll manage without you.”

She sat back in her chair, and with an inscrutable smile, turned her attention to the stage. At the end of the act half-a-dozen of the *jeunesse dorée* invaded her box; but while laughing and talking with them

she managed to signal Denvil with her fan. He turned to Juliet.

“The Fairweather wants to speak to me,” he said. “Shall I go?”

“Why, yes,” she answered; “you’ll hear all the news. Don’t forget to ask if old Miss Tyrell is alive.” For Juliet could not get over the idea that she had been away long enough for all her acquaintances to be dead and buried.

Denvil went quickly round to the Fairweather’s box, where he was welcomed with acclamation, and made a hero of.

“You are precious!” cried Mrs Felix. “People don’t die and come to life again every day! Fancy quietly walking off with the prettiest woman in London, and leaving us all to suppose you dead! What a honeymoon you have had. It isn’t given to every man to spend a year in honeymooning. And you are just as much in

love as ever. Ah, I see you are, you don't look at anyone else. Well, she is wonderfully lovely — worth a man sacrificing his career for. But, of course, you'll return to the stage now? I wish you could come with me to Australia. I am going on a starring tour, and I haven't settled with a *jeune premier* yet. There's only C——, who is handsome enough, but he is so stiff! You are the very man. But, dear me, you belong to Heywood. I'm afraid you will find him very difficult to deal with. He is more like a madman than ever; and lets it be seen a little too plainly that he cares for nothing but money and over-reaching other people."

So she ran on, in her low, rather rough voice, which, though not in the least melodious, was yet attractive. The curtain went up, as it seemed to Denvil, before they had begun to talk, and he made his

way back to Juliet. He was a little bewildered, and a little *tête montée* by the reception he had received from Mrs Felix ; she had never paid him much attention before. And how quickly he had stepped back to his place—what a rare chance lay close to his hand of reinstating himself—he could return from Australia at the end of the tour, and take his place in London, this little episode entirely forgotten. Could he persuade Juliet to go with him ? Could they evade Heywood ? He turned over all sorts of vague schemes in his mind, as he sat quietly in his stall watching the play without seeing it. After it was over they went and had some supper, and thoroughly enjoyed the return to the ways of the old world. They were like two children together, and many envious and admiring glances were cast at the two beautiful, radiant faces. The fog had lifted when they went out of the restaurant,

and they drove to their hotel through bright, busy streets. Juliet felt as if the dread and depression she had experienced earlier in the day were nothing but the shadows in a dark dream—she looked back on them as we look back upon nightmares. The excitement and amusement had lifted them entirely from her. She slept happily, thinking nothing of the difficulties and troubles before her. She planned to go and see Mr Ferguson, the indignant jeweller, the first thing after breakfast the next morning; and she felt no doubt whatever that when she came forward and told the truth, he would gladly make it as easy as possible for her to pay off her debt. She would have to work hard, no doubt—but that was no trouble. She had the activity and fire in her of youth and health and strength.

## CHAPTER V.

“The children’s games are over,  
The rest is over with youth—  
The world, the good games, the good times,  
The belief, and the love, and the truth.”

MR FERGUSON, sitting in his private room in his Regent Street shop about half-past ten the next morning, was thoroughly startled by an assistant coming in to him and saying,—

“Miss Juliet Vane wishes to speak to you, sir.”

He stared at the man incredulously for a moment, then he said,—

“You are sure of the name?”

“Quite sure, sir.”

“Tell her I shall be disengaged in ten minutes, and ask her to wait. And send a messenger to me instantly.”

He scribbled a short note, and when the messenger came told him to take a hansom and drive with it to Scotland Yard, and he did not see Juliet till the messenger, who had found a fast horse, returned, bringing with him a quiet, elderly man, who entered the shop and asked to see some diamond brooches. He seemed to be difficult to please, and gave his attention entirely to the jewels, scarcely glancing round the shop. But in that one imperceptible glance he had seen and recognised Juliet. When off duty he was a dramatic enthusiast, and had many a time worshipped Juliet from the pit when she was the idol of London. He was delighted to have such a notorious and lovely woman under his surveillance.

Juliet waited, perfectly unsuspecting of what was going on. She was getting a little impatient when at last an obsequious head-assistant came to her and said Mr

Ferguson was now disengaged, and would be glad to see her if she would kindly come into his room.

Mr Ferguson was a little man with a large head covered with a quantity of dark curls. He was always dressed in the latest fashion, and with the greatest care. He was a first-rate man of business, and an eminent lady-killer; having two qualities very highly developed, shrewdness and self-conceit. Juliet knew none of this, in fact, had paid less attention to the jeweller than she would have done to a man-servant, because he concerned her less. He had always been profoundly civil to her, that was all she recollected of him. Her personal transactions with him had not been large. She had bought a few things from time to time, and he always came quietly into the shop when she was there. He had rearranged her much valued black pearls for her, and taken a world of trouble over

it, as she thought. But she was unaware that some very large purchases had been made of Mr Ferguson, which he had known perfectly well were intended for her; he being, to a certain extent, in the confidence of some of his most extravagant clients. That the jewels bought for her were returned to the donors was nothing to him, and probably the confidence given him did not extend so far as to the knowledge of this fact. What he did know satisfied him, and he had always given her the profound deference due to one who brought him such excellent custom. He had regarded her with the admiration given, as a matter of course, to one who had boundless opportunities, and a great career before her—who might be covered with diamonds whenever she would. But now!—

He rose when she entered, though not instantly, and greeted her with distant civility

-- a manner quite different from his old obsequious one, which he kept for popular actresses, duchesses, and eminent *demi-mondaines*. At present Juliet did not belong to any of these classes, and he adopted a manner of tentative civility. He was startled to see her augmented beauty. Indeed it startled everyone. She was like a rose freshly opened in the early morning, with the softness of the dew upon it. What will she do with her beauty? was the question in Ferguson's mind as he looked at her with his tradesman's eyes, which regard everything from the marketable point of view.

Juliet sat down uninvited. She did not notice even that she was not invited, for the subtleties of Ferguson's manner were all lost on her. She began to talk in her soft, melodious, vibrating voice. Ferguson also sat down and listened. She did not refer in

any way to the reason for her flight. She merely spoke of Victoria Elwood, of the shop, of her position in it, of how it had all happened. She told him how she had seen the paper at Orvieto, and discovering then what had happened for the first time, had immediately started for London.

“And what do you propose to do?” inquired Mr Ferguson coldly as she paused.

“I shall return to the stage at once, and I will pay everything I legally owe. But I cannot believe I am responsible for these debts. I must find Mrs Elwood, and discover what has become of the things.”

“Mrs Elwood disappeared so immediately that I concluded, on hearing of your being alive, that you had gone together. At the time I thought her disappearance so strange, that I have had her watched, and I can tell you where to find her. She is in Paris, and is under the surveillance of the police there.

But she has not sold a single article of jewellery since she has been there. Of course, you understand that if she had stolen the things, she would have stolen them from you. You are responsible to us."

"But I did not buy the things," cried Juliet.

"They were bought in your name, which is exactly the same thing. No, Miss Vane, you cannot escape from the responsibility in that way."

"I do not wish to," said Juliet haughtily. "I am here to accept the responsibility. You can have me arrested at once if you wish, as a swindler or a thief, or whatever you like to call me."

"No," said Mr Ferguson. He was moving a paper-knife about on the table in front of him, and sat looking at it reflectively, as if slowly making up his mind how to act. "No, I will see what you

propose to do. When you make me a definite offer I will tell you if I can accept it."

"I cannot do that until I have seen Mr Heywood," said Juliet.

"I will wait till you have seen Mr Heywood, and in the meantime you shall not be molested. I don't think, Miss Vane, anyone could do more for you than that," said Ferguson, with something between a sneer and a smile, as he looked up at her

Juliet did not notice it. She was thinking of the difficulties that lay before her.

"Will you give me Mrs Elwood's address?" she said.

"I shall have to write to the police in Paris for it," he answered, "as I believe she has moved lately. But I will do that to please you."

"Thank you," said Juliet, and rose to go.

Ferguson looked up at her without rising at once.

“When do you make me your offer?” he asked.

“The day after to-morrow,” she replied.

“I will have Mrs Elwood’s address by then. Perhaps you will give me the pleasure of lunching with me,” he said, and rising as he spoke, stood looking at her.

Juliet was so completely surprised, that for a moment she was speechless. Then she summoned her self-possession, and said gravely and haughtily,—

“Excuse me; I am afraid that will be impossible.”

With a slight bow she swept out of the room. Ferguson followed her, assuming the manner with which he usually showed ladies to the door, when they were very handsome. He so habitually wore a mask, it was perfectly easy to assume it. But he

was furiously angry. Juliet's look of incredulity and disdain had made him her enemy.

She got into a passing hansom without another glance at him. But she noticed a man who held her dress from the wheel as she got in, and was struck by the expression of his face.

“Does he know me?” she wondered for a moment. But she forgot him instantly in the passion of wounded pride and indignation that rose within her. A few scalding tears fell down her cheeks, which she hastily wiped away. “It was because I was alone; because Maurice was not with me. Ah, and of course, the wretch does not know I am married. But even if I was not, because I had loved Maurice, would a creature like that have a right to insult me? What do they think of me? I cannot guess.”

It was but a short drive to her hotel, and she was soon there. As she entered the hotel after paying the cab, she looked back and caught sight momentarily of the face of the man who had held her dress from the wheel in Regent Street. A sudden instinct told her who it was.

“The police,” she said to herself. “He is having me watched. He could well afford to promise I should not be molested. The detestable wretch! Having sent for the police before he would see me, he dared to ask me to lunch with that expression on his face! Well, never mind, I prefer the surveillance of a policeman to the society of Mr Ferguson.”

She went quickly up to her sitting-room and went in. Lord Francis was sitting at the table, turning over some newspapers, and smoking a cigarette. He looked up at her and nodded pleasantly, as if he

had only parted from her when she went out an hour earlier.

“You are looking uncommonly well, Juliet,” he said, surveying her critically, “considering all things. But I won’t say I am glad to see you, for I am not, in spite of your being undeniably the prettiest woman I have seen for many a long day. No, I am not. I had got over my grief, which was sharp at the time. I am surprised at it, looking back. But then I lost a talented daughter with a blameless reputation, and a great career before her, either on the stage or in matrimony. You return prettier than ever, certainly, but with your reputation gone, your position sacrificed, your matrimonial chances at an end, and yourself marked by the police. I suppose your next appearance will be in a police-court.”

Juliet had quietly sat down at the other

side of the table, and was watching him while he spoke.

“I hope not,” she said, in a low voice. “I have just been to see Mr Ferguson. I was coming to see you. How did you know I was here?”

“Simply enough. I met the Fairweather at a supper-party last night. Denvil had told her where you were staying. I allowed her to give me the information I wanted, and then told her I took no interest in your affairs, and had nothing to do with them. It was to repeat this to you that I called. I preferred to save you the trouble of coming to my rooms.”

Juliet turned a shade paler as she listened to the cold, inflexible voice. She had no hope of dealing with Heywood without the assistance of Lord Francis, which she had relied on as a matter of course.

“You have no reason to be ashamed of

me," she said quietly, after a moment's thought. "What you say about my reputation is a mistake."

"What! After running away with another woman's husband!"

"Excuse me, I did nothing of the kind. I simply went away with my own husband. We were married a week before we went on tour. You will find the entry in the register in Fulham Church. Linda Raymond, who called herself Mrs Denvil, was not his wife."

Lord Francis stared at her in amazement.

"Well, upon my word, that is a pretty story," he said. "If it's true, you are a greater fool than I supposed existed. I can easily find out, and I will do so, for my own sake more than yours, for it is not at all pleasant to have a daughter talked about as you are being talked about, I can assure you, for a man in my position."

Juliet flushed now, but said nothing. Lord Francis looked at her attentively and reflectively, and lit another cigarette.

“Granting it’s true, what made you go off in that way?”

“To escape from several annoyances. One was the difficulty of Linda Raymond, who was very jealous, who had come to me as Maurice’s wife, and implored me not to take him from her. She had won my friendship, and I was placed in such a trying position that I would not allow Maurice to make our marriage known. We had been married quietly, because I knew you disapproved of Maurice—you had told me so—and I found you were capable of placing me in a false position in order to make me marry Lord Mannering. I found you had deliberately misled him.”

He had not spared her, and she would not spare him.

She was rewarded by catching an uneasy, anxious glance, which he directed at her. She quickly guessed that he did not want to fall in Mannering's estimation. Her wits had been sharpened by her experiences of the morning, and she found herself quick at making guesses. He made no reply. He knew she had not yet seen Mannering, and decided to say nothing at the moment. Like a shrewd skirmisher, he changed his point of attack.

"If Denvil is your husband, why is he not with you?" he inquired. "It seems to me that in such a tight place as you are in for his sake, he ought to stand by you."

"He had some business of his own to attend to this morning," said Juliet.

"And did not care to meddle in yours? I'm sure I don't wonder, considering the mess you are in. You don't know where

he is, I suppose? No? Well I can tell you. He is with the 'Fairweather,' reading the rôle of the *jeune premier* in the new play she is taking to Australia. She told me he was going to her this morning; that was why I waited for you. I don't particularly care to meet Denvil. He's a poor coward to have allowed you to sacrifice yourself as you have done."

"Don't say that," said Juliet, hastily. "The false position I am placed in is entirely from my own fault. I cannot explain it all to you now, but it is the fact."

"Quite possible," said Lord Francis, coolly, "from what I know of you. You have not the capacity to look after your own interests. Never did a woman more recklessly mar a splendid career, more wildly waste great opportunities. Now tell me the true story of this extraordinary affair

about that Bond Street shop and the jewels, and all the rest of it."

"I can't, till I find Mrs Elwood. The shop was hers. She asked me to start her, and I paid her first quarter's rent. I had no idea that I had made myself in any way responsible, and I had no idea she had ordered these things. Of their disappearance I know absolutely nothing."

"That pretty game was Victoria Elwood's doing, was it? Yes, it is like her, and not like you. Get her punished by all means, but it won't alter your responsibility."

"I see that now," said Juliet.

"But they are only trying to frighten you and me, and get their money that way. I don't blame them. But you are a minor. They can't do anything serious till you come of age. And in the meantime you may have recovered your theatrical position and be able to make some arrangement."

“That is my idea,” said Juliet, quickly. She saw that his attitude was altering towards her, and proposed to seize her advantage quickly. “The important thing now is to settle something with Mr Heywood. Do see him for me!”

Lord Francis shook his head and laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh.

“No,” he said; “that’s not my business now. Ask your husband to attend to your affairs. Good-morning. Allow me to tell you I think you a great fool to come back to London. However, you have proved yourself to have a habit of foolishness. I am glad to hear you are married, as it relieves me of all responsibility. Good-bye again.”

He left the room, bowing to her in his courtliest manner, and Juliet sat still and silent, thinking at first, afterwards feeling. For a while her mind went back over all

Lord Francis had said; but when she reached what he had told her about Denvil and Mrs Fairweather, suddenly there came a wild pain in her heart. Was it jealousy, or dread, or a presentiment? She could not tell. She did not know. She had never felt such a pain before. It was a bitter, an awful experience. But it passed. She told herself she was foolish indeed to suffer so quickly. Still she could not quite silence the awful thought that he might grow so disgusted with the difficulties before her as to leave her to fight them alone. The fact that he had avoided being with her this morning had dimly prepared her for something worse. Hitherto their love, after its realisation, had floated on seas too smooth to test its seaworthiness. Would it weather a storm? She knew her own love was final, with that fatal finality which destroys all possibility of any butterfly happiness. But

his? None could tell till it was tested.  
She saw the storm coming only too well  
now that her father would not help  
her

## CHAPTER VI.

“But their heart turned cold and they dropped  
their wings.”

JULIET was still sitting where Lord Francis had left her, deep in thought and feeling, when the door opened and Denvil entered. He looked bright and excited. The brightness died away a little as he glanced at Juliet's troubled face.

“Well?” he said. “You look worried Juliet. Don't let them worry you. You will lose your beauty if you do. Do you find you are in deep waters?”

“Yes,” she answered, and that was all that was said, for at that moment a waiter came in bringing lunch.

Juliet suddenly formed a resolution. A

chill distrust of everything and everyone was falling upon her like a veil, like a fog. She wondered if Denvil was capable of actually leaving the country with Mrs Fairweather's troupe and letting her fight her battle alone? She put the deadly thought back as being unworthy of her. But there was no making herself oblivious to the fact that he had avoided telling her of his visit to the Fairweather. It seemed strange he should not speak of it immediately. Was it possible he did not mean to tell her? If so, then there must be some such thought in his mind. Her sudden resolution was not to show her knowledge, but to wait and see if he spoke. Alas! such a resolution in itself is a rift in the lute of perfect confidence.

‘Now, tell me your morning's history?’ said Denvil as soon as they were alone again. Juliet told him while they sat at

lunch. Denvil shook his head over her interview with Lord Francis. "I can't say I like the idea of attacking Heywood," he said. "I don't see what's to be done about it. However, there'll be no choice very soon. He'll attack us. I wonder he's not here now, or somebody even more formidable to represent him. Look here, Juliet. You were obstinate about coming back and facing it all. Now you begin to see what it's like. Haven't you had about enough? Is it any use to go on? With Heywood to fight and pay we shall be miserable paupers whatever success we have. And you will be hampered by paying off those other debts. It will be a dog's life! And everyone looking askance at us. If I can take you right away at once out of it all to another country, will you come?"

Juliet was looking at her plate. She did not lift her eyes immediately. When she

did she regarded him very seriously for a moment. Then she rose from her place and went to the window.

“Come here,” she said, “I have something to show you. It does not matter now whether I would go or not. That man looking into the florist’s window there is really watching the hotel door. He is watching me. There is your answer.”

“A pretty complete one,” said Denvil, gloomily, and, going back to the lunch table, filled his glass with claret, and drank it off as if a new thirst had suddenly awakened in him. “We’ve made a terrible mess of things,” he went on in the same gloomy way. “Two lives spoiled! Hang it all! yours is the strangest kind of obstinacy. You *would* sacrifice us both to Linda Raymond, and now you sacrifice us for a set of tradesmen. There *was* some sentiment about the affair with Linda,

foolish as it was, but I'm hanged if I can see where the sentiment comes in now."

Juliet moved slowly back to the table and sat down in her place. Her glass was half - full of claret, and she raised it mechanically to her lips, which were parched, all in a moment, as though by a fever.

She made no answer to his reproach. She scarcely understood it. She hardly followed what he said, though the words came back to her afterwards—ay, years afterwards—clear and distinct, with the ring of his voice in them. They burned themselves into her heart and brain. But now she only knew that he reproached her, that was all she realised. He had changed! After a moment or two the pain she was suffering became so acute that it stupefied her, and she found herself dimly wondering what they had been talking about.

Denvil drank two or three more glasses of wine silently, got up and looked out of the window, and then took his hat and went out.

Juliet sat still. The waiter came to clear the table, and, seeing her there, went away again. She sat on, talking to her own heart; and it said terrible things. An awful voice spoke within her, and said,—“It is coming. He will leave you.”

One and all we experience the same utter amazement when a bitter suffering, such as we have read of in books and heard of in other people's lives, comes first home actually to ourselves. The initial contact with it is paralysing. Afterwards one becomes gradually accustomed to the dreadful companion, just as the prisoner, crushed almost to death at first by the horror of imprisonment, yet lives on.

Juliet was passing through this first

bitterness of realising that what she had so deeply commiserated, from the height of her own happiness, when it happened to other women, might happen to herself now, that its dread presence might actually be at the very threshold.

She was still sitting at the lunch table, absently looking at the cloth, and mechanically tracing the pattern on it with one hand, when the door was opened softly and some one entered. She supposed it to be the waiter again, and did not look up. Suddenly a strange feeling came over her, a feeling almost of fear. She shuddered as she raised her eyes to see who was in the room.

Linda Raymond stood on the other side of the table, leaning on it with one hand, and looking at Juliet intently. Juliet started violently and drew back a little; but she did not take her eyes from Linda's, and

for some minutes the two women regarded each other silently.

There was the most peculiar look on Linda's face, which changed it almost beyond recognition. It was a startled look of horror, such a look as one fancies he might wear to whom a vision of hell and its hatefulness had been given. It fascinated Juliet; she could think of nothing else. She would have been even more absorbed by it could she have known that it came on to Linda's face when she read that same newspaper paragraph which Juliet read at Orvieto.

At last Linda, who had been leaning forward, drew herself up, and spoke in a very low, quiet voice.

"It is true, then! I have seen you. I vowed I would see you with my own eyes before I believed it. It is true! I watched him leave the hotel before I came in. He

has been sitting here, opposite you, at lunch!"

She looked down at the chair by which she stood, she looked at the plate pushed aside, the broken roll, the emptied wine glass. All these had been touched by the hands of the husband she had mourned as dead. It seemed as if she wanted details in order to force herself to understand. After looking about her for a moment of silence, she looked again at Juliet.

"And he went away with you!" she said, "with you!—you! Ah, there is no word given to the human tongue fitted for you! How I loved and trusted you! Never mind. That is past. No more love or trust in this world for me! You have killed the woman I was; I am another woman now. I don't quite know myself yet. Oh, God, how awful it is to live! Without one

shred of faith or hope left! Your turn will come. He will leave you as he left me."

Suddenly she ceased speaking, turned, and went quietly out of the room. She was gone. She had not raised her voice while she spoke from the low, concentrated tone she had first used. Juliet had not uttered one word. And when Linda was gone she sat staring at the closed door like one bewildered.

Presently she sank back in her chair.

"How much more can I bear?" she exclaimed.

She was roused presently from a sort of stupor into which she fell by another visitor—a very different one. This was a mild gentleman, wearing spectacles, and having something the appearance of a learned professor. He asked her, with gentle civility, whether she was Miss Juliet Vane. She replied that she was; on which he handed

her a blue paper across the table, wished her good afternoon, and went away. She turned over the blue paper; but in the present state of her mind she was quite incapable of grasping its meaning, especially as she had no previous experience to guide her. It was a summons from Madame Lisa, of Regent Street, for eighty pounds due for goods delivered.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ I dreamed there would be Spring no more.”

IT grew late in the afternoon. Denvil did not return; the waiter cleared the table, without Juliet's noticing him or moving from her place. He was not surprised, for he knew almost as much about her affairs now as she did. An enterprising journalist, who had formed one of the supper party where Lord Francis had learned Juliet's address, had learned it in the same way; and the consequence was a paragraph in the two morning papers to which he was attached. These paragraphs were copied in the second edition of the evening papers, and by the afternoon the newspaper-reading public knew that Maurice Denvil and Juliet Vane, for whom the whole

play-going public had mourned inconsolably, were really not dead at all, but had appeared in the stalls of the Criterion Theatre on the previous evening, and were staying at a certain hotel. The proprietor of that hotel was pondering deeply in his own mind whether he should ask this handsome couple to transfer themselves, and the scandals attending them, to other quarters; or whether it would be to his advantage to keep them a little longer.

Juliet still sat at the table, leaning her head on her hand, lost in thought, in a profound review of the past, in a trance of feeling. Her heart had turned cold, and the wings of her buoyant spirit had drooped. The dreadful Hamlet feeling that the world is out of joint has fallen upon her in its bitter fulness. She did not fancy it was her mission to set it right. Linda's visit had given her an overpowering sense of her own

inability to do what was best even in her own affairs, much less in the affairs of any other. She had not opened her lips while Linda was in the room, for she knew it was useless. She saw that to Linda that which was her great sacrifice, seemed a crime; and no words, no deeds, nothing, could ever alter that appearance. It was useless even to think about it; but she could not prevent herself. Her mind went continually over the two aspects of the same event, trying in vain to reconcile them. It seemed to her that when she tried to do good, it was evil that came, and there is no conviction more paralysing, more crushing than this. For, to an aspiring or unselfish spirit, it takes away the very motive of life. Linda's quiet manner troubled her very much; it showed that her suffering, her surprise, were so keen, as to silence the virago in her. How would it end? What would Linda do now? Linda, whom

she had loved, and for whom she had tried to sacrifice her very self in sacrificing her happiness! One or two hot tears, tears that scalded the skin, struggled at last from her eyes, and dropped unnoticed on the tablecloth. Unnoticed by her, but not by someone else, who had quietly entered the room. Juliet was startled at last by hearing a sigh. She looked up and saw old Mrs Graham standing between the table and the door. She looked intensely prim and precise, dressed all in silver-grey, and with a narrow white frill inside her bonnet, lying on her soft grey hair. But her face had lost its habitual primness of expression; her eyes were full of tears, her mouth was trembling. Only those who knew her well could tell how extraordinary such signs of emotion were in her.

“Why, Graham!” exclaimed Juliet, “how glad I am to see you!”

And she was indeed. This was the face of a friend at last! Graham appeared to have been doubtful about her welcome. She advanced now to the table. Juliet caught her hand, in its grey silk glove, and clasped it tight.

“Oh, my dear Miss Juliet!” said Graham, “thankful I am to see you again, and lovelier than ever—more like your mother than you used to be, but lovelier than ever she was. You’re in trouble, dear Miss Juliet; I can see you’ve brought trouble on yourself. I knew it would be so, from the moment I knew it was Mr Denvil you fancied. He’s too handsome.”

“Come and sit down by me,” said Juliet.

Graham did so, and Juliet kept her hand, holding it tight. It was an inexpressible comfort to her to feel that friendly touch. For some time they sat like this, quite quiet. Graham was the first to speak.

“Miss Juliet, dear, is there anything I can do for you now? At this moment, I mean. Have you got a maid with you? Can I take off my bonnet and stay and do everything for you like I used?”

“I’ve no maid, Graham; but I am used to that now. I don’t need one. I have not many dresses to attend to. No, Graham, I don’t want a maid; I want a friend. I need that very much, and I haven’t one in all the world that I know of but you.”

Graham uttered an exclamation, and then was silent for a few moments. Then she said,—

“Miss Juliet, you have only to give me my orders.”

She could not bring herself to express her emotion, her longing to be of use, in any less formal way. She belonged to the old school.

“I am in a terribly difficult position, Graham,” said Juliet presently; “so com-

plicated that I don't know which way to turn. I wish I knew how to deal with Mr Heywood. Until I have come to some sort of arrangement with him, until I know what he is going to do, I am helpless. I have got until to-morrow to decide what to do. Can you help me think?"

"It's your contract with him that's the trouble, isn't it, Miss?" asked Graham.

"Yes, I have broken it, of course, running away as I did. And he had told me before that if I wished to evade it—as I did then, for reasons I need not go into—well, because I did not want to go on tour—he told me then that he should go to law, and make me pay a heavy fine. What he will say or do now I cannot imagine. I don't know how to start with him—whether to go and see him, or what to do. If I could get him to deal with me leniently! But oh, it's hard to have to ask him that, after the past!"

“It is, Miss Juliet. But why should it fall to you to do it? What about Lord Francis?”

Juliet shook her head.

“I have seen him,” she said, in a tone so hopeless that it was not necessary to say anything further to show Graham that from that quarter no help was to be expected.

“Well, Miss, it’s no wonder if his lordship won’t exert himself, for it’s through no fault of his you are in your present position. But what about Mr Denvil?”

The inference was evident, and Juliet was obliged to admit it was just. She made no immediate answer, for she did not quite know what to say. Truth to tell she did not know yet what to think. She had not put it to Denvil direct, the question of what he proposed to do about Heywood, therefore she had no right to suppose that he was not intending to take the initiative.

While she was debating how to express her doubts, Denvil's step was heard on the stairs ; he opened the door quickly and came in. Graham rose and glanced at Juliet, ready to take any hint her face might give. Denvil recognised the old servant at once, and greeted her in the charming manner he always had at command. Graham received his greetings with perfect respectfulness. No one would have suspected that she condemned him as "too handsome" and that she looked upon him as the destroyer of her dear young lady's life.

"Haven't you any little job for me, Miss Juliet," asked Graham, with a look which said very plainly,— "I know I can't stay here ; but don't send me altogether away yet !"

"You will find a lace dress in my room that wants a little attention," said Juliet. "The room on the other side of the corridor," she added.

Graham instantly took the hint and went away. As soon as the door was closed on her Juliet turned to Denvil.

“Maurice,” she said abruptly, “what are we to do about Heywood? Are you going to see him? I cannot make any arrangements until I know what he is going to do.”

“Yes,” he answered; “I will go and see him this evening. We will know what fate lies before us, before the night. Juliet, this day has positively altered you! I can see by your face that something has happened since I went out.

“Linda has been here,” she said in a low voice. “It was terrible!” she added, after a moment’s pause. “She made me feel like a lost soul.”

“Naturally,” said Denvil, with a sort of gloomy ferocity. “That’s all the gratitude one ever gets for these quixotic deeds.”

Juliet said no more. What could she

say? The sympathy between them on this subject had never been full, now it was ended altogether. His passionate love for Juliet had given her a power over him which compelled him to look at the position to some extent from her point of view. He had combated her view, yet submitted to it. As a matter of fact, though submitting to her view, he had really been guided entirely by his own terror of Linda's temper, and his dread of how she might persecute him. It is wonderful to see what cowards strong men become before a passionate woman, and how deeply they will plunge into deceit rather than brave a virago's tongue.

As he was speaking, he noticed the blue paper that lay on the table. He took it up and looked at it.

"This is charming," he said, "really charming."

Juliet leaned back wearily.

“I think I will keep Graham with me,” she said rather irrelevantly. “I don’t like being quite alone when these things happen. Will you tell them I want a room for her?”

Denvil, who seemed glad of a break in the conversation, brief though it was, rang the bell and gave the order to the waiter. Almost immediately the man returned with a message to say that the manager would like to speak to Mr Denvil for a moment. Denvil, surprised, went down at once to the manager’s room. He came back with a rueful face.

“He wants us to go,” he explained. “He says our rooms are pre-engaged, so go we must. The truth being that we are too notorious, and that he doesn’t care about detectives and sheriff’s-officers hanging about the doorway. Quite natural; but

where are we to go? We shall have exactly the same difficulty everywhere."

"Have we to go *to-night*?" asked Juliet, in dismay.

"I'm afraid so. We had better find some quiet rooms. Let's ask Graham if she knows of any. I suppose she understands the situation?"

"Oh, yes; we need have no secrets from Graham."

Denvil summoned her, and the old servant came into the room with so exactly the same air and manner she had worn in the old Putney days that for a moment a feeling came over Juliet as if all the last year, which separated her so utterly from them, must be a dream. What joy she had known since then! Was it all a dream, an unreality?

Graham understood the situation almost before it was explained. She had learned

enough from a few words exchanged with a chamber-maid.

“I’m afraid, sir,” she said to Denvil, “you’ll not be able to stay anywhere that would be comfortable.” She stood thinking, with a very perplexed expression on her face. Suddenly a sort of flush came on her faded cheeks. An idea had come into her head that evidently startled herself. “If you wouldn’t mind small rooms, and an out-of-the-way place,” she said, “I have a nice little house out at Holloway where I live all by myself. It wouldn’t seem strange to Miss Juliet, for at the sale at Putney I bought as many of her mother’s things as I could afford.”

“Was there a sale?” faltered Juliet.

“Yes, Miss, and high prices, too. There was a rare excitement. I do think, sir,” she went on, turning to Denvil again, “you would both be

comfortable in my little house, and safe too."

"It's the very thing, I am sure," said Denvil. "Don't you think so, Juliet?"

"Oh, yes," she exclaimed; "I think it's a splendid idea."

"Then the sooner you pack up and get off the better, for they are inclined to be insolent here. I'll pay the bill as I go out; I am going down to the theatre now to see Heywood. Give me the address, Graham, and I'll come straight there. You'll take all my things, won't you?"

He wrote the address in his pocket-book, and hurried off. Juliet felt strangely thankful at this chance of a haven which seemed something like a home.

She went with Graham to pack up; and for the first time for a year did none of the work herself, but sat and looked on and gave orders. It was very pleasant to have

the quiet old woman moving about the room, arranging everything so quickly and quietly. Suddenly she startled Graham by saying abruptly,—

“Why do you call me Miss Juliet?”

“Oughtn't I to, Miss?”

“Not now; I am an old married woman, surely, Graham!” said Juliet.

“Married!” repeated Graham. She was folding up a dress. She put it down gently and turned to look at Juliet. “But that lady, Mrs Denvil—”

“She was not Mrs Denvil,” said Juliet briefly. “I was married to Mr Denvil before he went away on tour. The very first day that lady came to see me we had been married in the morning. Perhaps you remember I had been out alone.”

“Yes, I remember,” said Graham. “And I remember you would have a perfectly clean white dress, though the one you wore the day

before was not soiled. Oh, Miss, excuse me, but you have made a terrible mistake!"

"I wanted to spare her!" said Juliet, in a low voice.

"Yes, Miss, I understand that, for I saw how she talked to you. But it's no use in this world! If you are too good to people it always ends badly!"

Juliet made no answer. She was beginning to feel the truth of this only too vividly. Nothing more was said. Graham went quickly on with the packing, and very soon they were driving away to Holloway, followed by another cab containing the detective.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“I loved thee once, Atthis, long ago.”

DENVIL went straight to the theatre and met Heywood just as he was going in at the stage door. The two men surveyed each other with strange looks.

“I want to speak to you,” said Denvil.

“Certainly, with pleasure,” said Heywood, with suspicious civility. “Pray come in to my room.”

He led the way down the dark passage to that untidy room where, little over a year ago, he had given Juliet's address to Linda Raymond. He had scarcely counted then on this small treachery producing such wide results.

They went into the room, and Heywood shut the door. He did not ask Denvil to sit down, and remained standing himself.

“Now,” he said, “what is it?”

“As I suppose you know,” said Denvil, speaking slowly, as if choosing his words with care, “Miss Vane, who is now Mrs Denvil, has returned to London, as well as myself. We both wish to return to the stage; and the first thing we have to do is to come to some terms with you about our broken contracts.”

“Naturally,” said Heywood, with a sneer. “I scarcely think you’ll find another manager to take you up till you’ve settled with me!”

“I do not speak of anything so absurd,” said Denvil, trying hard to keep his temper, on which Heywood had always had a specially irritating effect. “I am here to settle with you.”

“Well, can you pay the double forfeit?” asked Heywood, his pale eyes beginning to glitter malignantly.

“I have no money,” answered Denvil.

“What do you propose to offer me, then—work?”

“Yes.”

“It’s kind of you. I don’t know that I want it. The comic opera is paying very well. What a fool she was, if she must run away, not to run away with a rich man! I might have found it in my heart to forgive her then. But I suppose she fancied your pretty face.”

Denvil was just able to control himself sufficiently to say nothing. There was silence for a minute or two, during which Heywood appeared to reflect profoundly. Then he said,—

“I’m prepared to meet you half-way. If you like to work out your debt to me,

well and good. The play that was written for Miss Vane is lying there in my drawer, and I think it is a good one. I'll put on 'Evangeline' next week, and put the new play in rehearsal at once, if you agree to my terms. You must both sign for three years without salary."

Denvil opened his mouth to speak and then closed it again. He looked very earnestly at Heywood.

"Are you serious?" he asked.

"Perfectly serious!" was the reply.

"How do you suppose we are to live?"

Heywood shrugged his shoulders.

"Really," he said, "that is not my affair."

"I suppose not," said Denvil, thoughtfully. "But really, Heywood, you might make an offer which would give us enough to live on, and yet pay you well. It would take a little longer, that's all."

“I have made my offer, and said my last word,” said Heywood. “Let me have your answer and Miss Vane’s to-morrow. Unless you agree to my terms, exactly as I have stated them, I withdraw from personal negotiations entirely, and you shall hear from my lawyer. Good morning, Mr Denvil.”

Denvil went quickly out, anxious not to meet anyone or be detained. He took a cab and drove to Mrs Felix Fairweather’s house. To his relief he found that, though going out, she had not yet gone. Her brougham was waiting for her at the door. He sent a message to her, begging to speak to her for a moment. The servant came back quickly to say that Mrs Fairweather would come to him as soon as she was dressed, if he liked to wait. So he went into the actress’s drawing-room, which was crowded with furniture and

photographs, sketches (artists' gifts), and flowers. It was a bewildering place, lacking the restful sense given by one strong personality. The Fairweather's personality was strong enough, but she did not colour her rooms with it. It was her admirers who gave her rooms their character, with their countless gifts. Denvil walked about the room, glancing from one portrait to another, criticising the faces.

Presently she came in, leaving the door a little ajar. Some one had come downstairs with her, who had been in her dressing-room when the servant came to say Denvil was there, and to please whom the Fairweather left the door ajar. This person was Linda Raymond.

She had arrived at the door of the hotel that morning just as Denvil was coming away from it; and, instead of going in, had followed him.

She saw him enter Mrs Fairweather's house. She waited till he left it, and then entered herself. She knew Mrs Fairweather just well enough to pay her an unceremonious visit. When Denvil was supposed dead, the Fairweather, who had kind-hearted impulses, went to call on Linda and sympathise with her. Indeed, all the profession were very kind to the supposed widow, and Linda made more acquaintances all this time than she had ever had before. She was interested in Mrs Fairweather, because she had been madly jealous of her before she had ever been jealous of Juliet. Mrs Fairweather, who still believed Linda to be Denvil's wife, was immensely interested at her appearance directly after Denvil's departure. She felt herself to be in the midst of one of those little tragedies of real life which she delighted in. Her peculiar character and reputation gave her many opportunities of this kind, and she always

declared the study of such situations to be immensely valuable to an artist. At all events, it amused her to listen to Linda's story, and to her passionate longing for revenge.

"Let me come and see you again this evening," cried Linda, before she went away.

"I cannot bear to be alone now!"

"I am going out," said Mrs Fairweather. "I am going to the Papillon"—a Bohemian club, of which she was a notorious member. "I will take you with me if you will dress yourself beautifully."

"Oh, indeed I will. You are a benefactor, a true friend! I am longing for excitement and amusement."

And so, when Linda had visited Juliet, and satisfied herself that she was there in the flesh, she had driven home and made an elaborate toilette, and then driven back to Mrs Fairweather's house. There was some-

thing slightly Mephistophelian about the dress she had chosen ; and two brilliant spots of colour on her cheeks looked exactly as if she had rouged herself recklessly. All the mournfulness had left her great dark eyes ; they burned with a fierce fire. It is doubtful if Denvil would have recognised her if he had seen her.

The Fairweather felt amused at leaving the wife to listen while she talked to the husband. She came in with her triumphant air, her look of conscious power, which made one forget her faded face. She was a living contradiction to that aphorism of Oscar Wilde's, which Lord Francis was so fond of quoting : " There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth." Denvil, who had so long been a high priest of the gospel of youth, knew that it faded and dwindled to nothing in the presence of such a woman as this ; one who could conquer everything but death.

Her consummate wickedness gave her a power beside which the charm of youth seemed trivial.

“How wonderful you are!” said Denvil, in a low voice, as she approached him. She was dressed in a sheeny, changing silk, that reminded one of a serpent’s skin; round her thin waist a glittering serpent of gold and jewels was coiled, and on her left arm—the sole ornament of her arms, which were singularly beautiful—was coiled a small live snake. This was one of her favourite toilets when she was in a fantastic humour. Had Denvil been an intimate friend of hers, he would have known that the donning of this serpent dress was a danger signal. But to him it was only a wondrous toilette; and her pleasant smile and gentle eye won his confidence. He was in a very desperate frame of mind; he wanted a friend, and here was one ready to his hand.

Linda soon gathered from what passed that the Fairweather's influence over Denvil was not that of her personal charms, so far. She would have found nothing to fasten upon in their conversation, supposing she still had the right to be jealous. Mrs Fairweather talked like a friend and a man of business. She had one characteristic—and one only—in common with Victoria Elwood, and that was a striking frankness of manner, which must disarm any fairly unsuspecting person.

The game she was playing with Denvil now was simply to make him feel that she was advising him for his own good. She was certain she could play it well enough to deceive even the woman who listened at the door. The facts that she could not find a *jeune premier* for her troupe, that she would give anything to secure Denvil, because she felt she could

“play to” him, that she was as much enamoured of his *beaux yeux* as it was possible for her to be — these little circumstances were quite her own property, as she considered. She had her own special ideas about personal rights.

“Well,” she said, after listening to all Denvil had to tell her, “Heywood is only forcing your hand. Of course, he knows you can as easily pay his damages down as live for three years without a salary. What do you propose to do?”

Denvil looked at her helplessly.

“I haven't the faintest idea,” he said. “You would take me to Australia, I know, after what you said this morning; but I can't allow you to get into trouble with Heywood over it. What can I do? I must get out of this dreadful fix. I can't stand poverty and bailiffs. They're not in my line.”

“You certainly are in a very awkward position,” said Mrs Fairweather thoughtfully. “I wonder if I can trust you. If so, I can help you. But you must never let anyone suppose I have had anything to do with it.”

“Trust me, dear Mrs Fairweather! Why, I should simply be a fool to betray your kindness!”

“Very well. If you like to go to Australia at once, and escape, you can wait for me there; and your position with me is certain. I have engaged no one. I was in treaty with C——, but I will tell him I have heard of an Australian actor who will suit me. And you must change your name, and not trust a living soul with the secret.”

“A second disappearance!” said Denvil, with an uneasy laugh. “It seems odd, as if one had to go on with that sort

of thing having once begun; but I am unutterably grateful to you!"

"Let me know to-morrow morning. You will have a splendid life there. We shall be feted and worshipped. And you are safe with my troupe. There is no one who knows you personally—they are all from the provinces."

She did not mention an amateur whom she had promised to take,—a dark-eyed woman standing at the door,—who had been willing to pay her own expenses and play waiting-maid for the sake of seeing and hearing this man every night.

"You must go now," Mrs Fairweather said, raising her voice a little and turning to the door as she spoke. This was the agreed signal for Linda to draw back into another room while he went out. "I am late, and I have a friend waiting for me."

“May I not see you to your carriage?” asked Denvil.

“No, go first; I prefer it.”

She spoke in her domineering, capricious manner, which left the person she was speaking to no choice but to obey. Denvil said good-bye, and went submissively. He was quiet, like one who is a little dazed. Mrs Fairweather went out into the hall as the front door closed. Linda was standing there, running the risk of discovery, looking after him with eyes full of bitter fire. She ran to the Fairweather and caught her arm.

“*That* was the man I worshipped!” she cried; “that pitiful coward! Why, he is *frightened!* He wants to run away! And not a word of Juliet Vane! Is he *tired* of her?”

“No,” said Mrs Fairweather, with the air of a family physician diagnosing a rather unusual case. “No, if none of this difficulty

had come on them, I can tell by the way he looks at her he would have loved her for another five years. But his own ease stands first in Denvil's mind always. He is capable of anything to secure that."

"I don't think I want to go with you to Australia now," said Linda. "I would rather not see him again as long as I live. I should like to revenge myself on him for the useless suffering he has caused me, and the wasted love I have given him."

"Ah!" cried Mrs Fairweather, contemptuously, "there is not a man in the world worth suffering for, or worth revenging yourself on. Come, we are late. You will enjoy yourself to-night, and forget him."

Linda got into the carriage, perfectly aware that in going to the Papillon with Mrs Felix Fairweather she was entering on a new phase of life.

## CHAPTER IX.

“The Shadow sits and waits for me.”

LINDA RAYMOND got home very late that night to her little Kensington house, which had for a year been darkened with half-closed blinds. Her widowhood had been genuine, indeed, and, but for the revelation which came to change herself and all her ideas, would have lasted till she was laid in her grave.

She went up to the drawing-room when she got in, and looked round her. The room was still the altar at which Denvil was worshipped—more so, perhaps, than ever. Old photographs of him, and stray ones bought at shops, had been added to the great collection. A wreath of cypress

hung upon the portrait on the easel. Immortelles framed some of the photographs, and there was a smell of incense in the air. Sad rites had been celebrated here! Sleepless nights of agony and tears—yes, and of repentance—had been passed in this drawing-room by an impassioned and earnest worshipper.

Linda, the devout worshipper in the past, looked round her now with a cold, critical eye. Denvil had said to Juliet that this day had changed her!—it had certainly changed Linda. Her face wore a cold hard look, which had never been on it before. All her passions hitherto had been fiery; now it was as if her heart had turned to a lump of ice. She hated Denvil, but with a cold, contemptuous hatred, unlike anything she had ever felt in her life. It made her another person, and she hardly recognised herself.

After lighting all the candles, and looking critically at all Denvil's portraits, one after another, she put a light to the fire, which was ready laid in the grate. When the flame leaped up and was strong, she took a photograph, regarded it again, scrutinisingly, and put it into the blaze. It is strange to burn a photograph and watch the face writhe in seeming agony as the card curls up in the heat. It gave Linda a feverish pleasure, which eased a little the pain she was suffering from. She snatched another and flung it into the blaze, standing with a smile on her face to watch its destruction. And so she went on, till all the photographs were destroyed. Then she took the painting from the easel and put it on the ground with its face turned to the wall. The crayon she took from its frame and tore into pieces. Looking round to see if any trace of the

man she had loved remained, she caught sight of a little bust of him which had been modelled by a sculptor who had worshipped his beauty. She threw it on to the ground, where it lay in a hundred pieces. The noise of this last act of destruction roused her servant, who came creeping downstairs, half-asleep, to see what was happening. She found the drawing-room a blaze of light, the fire burning on the hearth, a mass of blackened paper, and Linda sitting in an arm-chair, exhausted and quiet. She turned her head as the woman entered.

“I am glad you are awake,” she said. “Help me to undress—I am tired.”

She offered no explanation of the extraordinary appearance of the drawing-room, full of empty frames. But the servant understood perfectly. Servants always know everything; and everybody reads the

newspapers. The woman thought to herself, "She has seen him to-day!" that was all.

Linda went quietly to her bed, and lay there, with still the same strange feeling, as if her brain was made of fire and her heart of ice—actual ice; she pressed her hands upon it to try and bring some warmth there.

"I don't want to follow him now," she said to herself. "It would weary me. I want one sharp, short revenge, and then to forget him."

Suddenly a thought came to her. "If the coward really runs away, I will let Heywood know it. He shall reckon with Heywood before he goes! I think that madman will avenge me. Ah, how I would love to see that beautiful face broken to pieces, bruised out of all beauty! If I were a man I would do it with my own

two hands! I would do it, though I am a woman, if I were but strong enough!"

And she clenched her hands furiously as she lay there in her bed, cold, sleepless.

"I will be avenged," she thought, "and then I will forget him and begin to live."

She rose in the morning in the same humour; dressed carefully, and went early in the day to Mrs Fairweather's house. She decided on letting Mrs Fairweather still suppose that she wanted to go to Australia with her in order to follow Denvil. She would then learn from her exactly what Denvil was doing. She guessed that the Fairweather would not care to trust her if she did not suppose her interest in Denvil's leaving the country safely to be as great as her own. She therefore visited her early, to learn what she could, and to rectify any impression left on Mrs Fairweather's mind by what she

had said yesterday in the first revulsion of feeling—that she did not care to follow him.

Mrs Fairweather was not up; she never rose till the middle of the day. But she received Linda all the same. Her bedroom was unique; it contained absolutely nothing but the bed, which was covered with white lace, and one armchair. The floor was carpeted with roses, and the walls papered with them. On the mantelshelf was a single large photograph in a gorgeous frame. The Fairweather, in a white peignoir, lay back on a large lace-edged pillow, and read a book which was held in front of her by a mechanical contrivance fastened to the bed. She pushed it aside when Linda entered, and looked up smiling at her.

“I have heard from him this morning,” she said, and took a note from under her pillow, which she handed to Linda.

The sheet of paper contained but one word, "Yes," in Denvil's handwriting. Linda looked at it in silence, and handed it back.

"I arranged," went on Mrs Fairweather, "that if he said yes, I would send him the money for his passage, for he tells me he is cleared out. I can't quietly post him a cheque, as I should under any other circumstances, for I should not care that it should be discovered afterwards that he had cashed a cheque of mine. And I have told him not to come here again for the same reason—I ought not to have let him come at all, for people are so ready to talk. But I did not contemplate, at first, anything quite so desperate as what he is going to do. I thought it would merely mean my helping him to pay Heywood off. Well, we must make the best of it. I shall hear from him again to-day as to where I am to send the

money. What humour are you in to-day? Are you coming to Australia with me?"

"Of course!" cried Linda, who had now reached that state of feeling when a lie or the truth are the same.

"Ah, well," said the Fairweather, "how should I know? I thought perhaps you had seen enough of him."

"Let me stay till you hear from him again!"

"By all means. Sit down in that chair and talk to me. You don't look as if you had slept last night."

"No, I did not sleep at all."

"What! Not after that delightful supper! I slept like a baby. What did you do? Walk about and rave at your own folly in ever having loved anybody? I suppose most women go through that phase some time or other."

"No, I did not do that. I lit a fire,

and burned all his photographs. It was a pleasure! I should like to do it again!"

Mrs Fairweather laughed a little.

"Well, that's dramatic," she said, "especially by force of contrast. Fancy wasting your time in that way, after a delightful evening and a good supper! He's not worth it. No man is."

"Perhaps not," said Linda; "but I can't help it."

"Not yet—but it will pass—and then you will begin to enjoy life. I almost think I raved and stormed a little about somebody once, but it's so long ago I really can't be quite sure. Ah, I have lived since then!"

Her heavy eyelids drooped as she spoke, and the eyes narrowed to a line. But what a restless, dominant, pleasure-loving spirit looked out from that narrow space! Linda looked at her, and dimly realised how

great a gulf was fixed between herself and that woman. And yet that gulf was narrowing! Every hour that passed leaving her heart still a mere lump of ice, lessened the gulf a little.

Mrs Fairweather had a lunch-party of intimate friends only, and asked Linda to stay to it. Linda was glad to, not only because it enabled her to be at hand and hear news of Denvil directly it arrived, but also because the reckless spirits that surrounded Mrs Fairweather pleased her in her present humour. The language of *raffiné* pleasure-seeking, of *fin de siècle* indifference and cynicism, which was talked here, was a relief to her sick spirit. Here was acknowledged but one religion, that of selfish pleasure. Linda had long known the bitterness of having sinned against the social ordinances of the world, of the secret consciousness of guilt. But here she felt like

a child in innocence; she could but look and learn. It distracted and amused her as nothing else could have done.

While they sat over the dessert, talking and laughing, a telegram came, and was brought in to Mrs Fairweather. She glanced at it and then at Linda, and then put it back in its envelope, and into her pocket. Linda understood it was from Denvil. Gradually the visitors took their leave, and went away to their various afternoon engagements; and Linda and Mrs Fairweather were left alone in the over-furnished drawing-room.

“What does he say?” demanded Linda, directly the door had closed on the last guest.

“He leaves to-night—he finds there is a ship starting which he can just catch—and I am to send a messenger to him at the Euston hotel at eight o'clock. He

is going by the night train. I must drive down to the bank and draw out some money. Will you come with me?"

Linda went gladly. Little did she care now that it was fatal to a woman's reputation to be seen with Mrs Felix Fairweather. Linda felt herself alone in a dreary waste of a world, and she was completely indifferent as to what that world thought of her. Her great desire was to be not alone, to be distracted.

"Will he be at the hotel in his own name?" she asked.

"Oh yes; he is too well known by sight in London to attempt any disguise. It would only excite suspicion."

Linda now knew all that she wanted to know. She went out with Mrs Fairweather, and came back with her; and then went to her own house, where she walked restlessly up and down in the

drawing-room, which was now an altar laid waste. She took the painting from its place against the wall, and looked at it for some minutes. Oh, that beautiful face! those eyes like wet violets! That exquisitely shaped mouth, with its quiver of sensitiveness! Her face hardened as she looked.

The afternoon wore on to evening, and Linda went out again.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SHADOW AT THE DOOR.

DENVIL and Juliet had talked almost the whole night. He had not lightly determined on taking the desperate step he was about to take. He told her about his interview with Heywood; and they discussed the whole position and the future that lay before them. Until two in the morning they stayed in Graham's prim little parlour talking in low voices. When Juliet at last rose and climbed the narrow staircase to the bedroom, which was Graham's pride and delight, she flung herself wearily on the bed without undressing. She realised to the full now that Denvil, the most charming of com-

panions in prosperity, was, in trouble, a broken reed indeed. The difference in the two characters came out very markedly in this crisis. Denvil's one idea was to evade consequences, to "get out of" the results of foolish deeds. Juliet's was to accept them, to face and fight them. They, who had hitherto been as one in mind and feeling, now that they had to encounter difficulty, found themselves not merely two, but positively antagonistic.

His love for her had not paled, nor was it yet "kissed out by passion," and he made a hard fight to keep her. He tried to persuade her to disguise herself and so escape from the police. He assured her that once away they would be safe and happy again, and told her that he had an offer which would enable them to live. He gave her no remotest hint that

he intended to go alone if she would not go with him.

“No,” said Juliet, “now that I have returned I will see it out. To run away would be simply disgraceful. I could never come back, or face the world again. I must find other ways of making money while playing for Heywood. I don’t see why I shouldn’t give lessons. I must think, think! It would be possible to live here very cheaply.”

Denvil surveyed the small prim room with dismay. “Well,” he said, “that would be beginning life over again with a vengeance. Fancy playing lead in London, and living like a provincial actor who gets four pounds a week.”

“It will be no hardship to me,” said Juliet, “if I can get things right in that way. There are some things which can never be set right” (she was thinking of

Linda), "but money matters can be by work and patience."

"You think you can move mountains, Juliet," said Denvil; "but you can't, you are only being unreasonable."

The discussion ended just where it began; and Juliet, who was worn-out with the various emotions of the day, went upstairs and lay down on her bed. Denvil walked about the parlour for a while, and then sat down and wrote two letters. One was to Mrs Felix Fairweather, and contained only the word "yes"—the other took him some time. He read it over several times when it was finished, then put it into an envelope, which he addressed to Juliet—Mrs Maurice Denvil, with the Islington address. Evidently he intended this to go through the post; he put it carefully into his pocket-book. This done, he went softly upstairs. Juliet was asleep, lying

there in her dress. He stood and looked at her very earnestly. "What a glorious creature she is!" he thought. "Fate is hard on me," — the favourite complaint with men and women whose minds are made like Denvil's. After a long look, which was really a farewell,—for knowing Juliet as he did, he did not expect to see her again, he felt that she would despise him too much to admit of their being re-united, even if life should become less difficult,—he turned away abruptly, and began to select a few of his own possessions, which he could put into his pockets and carry easily.

It was daylight now; but he drew the blinds close and got an hour or two of restless sleep. When he came downstairs to the perfect little breakfast Graham had prepared, he had recovered all his good looks, which had waned a little over-

night. The decision taken, the idea of freedom, of a new country, of plenty of money, excited and exhilarated him. It is wonderful what an easy thing change is to an unstable nature. Denvil, as he entered the little parlour, was the personification of beautiful youth, just as he had been on the Putney lawn, when he had won Juliet's heart. Graham, as she glanced at him, thought that indeed Juliet had some excuse for her folly. She went upstairs to Juliet's room with some coffee, and found her white and wan, complaining of a weary headache.

“And oh, Graham,” she said, “I know it is foolish, but I have such a dreadful weight on me — a presentiment of trouble that I can't shake off.”

“You are tired, Miss Juliet, that's all,” said Graham; “tired to death. Lie still and rest. You will want all your strength by-and-bye.”

Juliet felt that this was perfectly true. She drank the coffee, and presently fell asleep again.

Denvil went out soon after breakfast, telling Graham he could not tell when he should return.

Juliet slept on half the morning, and the little house was perfectly quiet, except that about noon, a mysterious stranger, a gentlemanly young man, knocked at the door, and asked for Miss Juliet Vane. Graham told him she was not yet up, whereupon he said he would call later. Juliet came downstairs soon afterwards, looking paler than usual, but refreshed.

“I am better now,” she said. “I can think again. I had better see Heywood myself, and agree to his terms, and then get some advice as to how to make a little money to live on. I will go and

ask old Miss Tyrell; I know she used to give lessons.

“You seem to reckon without Mr Denvil, ma'am,” said Graham.

“I don't know what his plans are,” said Juliet slowly, “and I must not delay. He doesn't know his own plans yet. It is a very difficult position. After I have attended to these things, I must consider how to get at Mrs Elwood. She is responsible to me for all these things that have disappeared. I'm afraid it's no use writing to her; but perhaps they would let me go over to Paris.”

At this moment there was a knock at the door. It was the gentlemanly young man.

“Oh, of course I will see him,” said Juliet, with resignation, though she only anticipated something disagreeable.

However, the interview was very brief.

He simply handed her a blue paper, and on Juliet's taking it from him, politely withdrew.

“Don't go out to-day, Miss Juliet,” implored Graham, who inevitably used the old name when she was at all agitated. “It would be so dreadful in the street. Let them all come here.”

Juliet admitted there was something in this, the more readily that each of these little adventures left her more nervous and shaken than the last.

“Victoria Elwood shall pay for this,” she exclaimed, her eyes flashing dangerously. “I will go to Paris and find out the truth from her. I had better go and see Heywood to-day, Graham.”

But Graham persuaded her to put off all her business till the next morning.

“If you'll take a quiet day, Miss, and go to bed early to-night, you'll be twice

as fit to do all you have to do to-morrow."

Juliet yielded, and thus it happened that she was altogether spared the ordeal of an interview with Heywood.

That evening an event took place which put an end to Heywood's career as a theatrical manager.

The afternoon passed quietly away in the little house at Holloway. No other visitors, welcome, or unwelcome, arrived; and Juliet sat and talked from time to time to Graham, as in the old days. When evening came she began to wonder why Denvil was absent so long. It passed away, and still he did not come. At midnight she rose and said she would go to bed. At the same moment there came a knock at the door.

"Oh, what can that be!" exclaimed Graham, "at this hour of the night."

“Maurice, of course,” said Juliet.

“No, Miss, that’s not a gentleman’s knock,” said Graham, and went away to answer it.

## CHAPTER XI.

“I am glad he is dead.”

WHEN Linda Raymond left her house that evening she went straight to the theatre and asked for Heywood at the stage-door.

“He has just gone in, ma’am,” said the doorkeeper; “but he is very busy to-night.”

This expression was an euphuism at the theatre for “in a very bad temper.” Linda knew that, and was well pleased. “All the better,” she thought.

“I’ll go in and knock at his door,” she suggested, seeing that the man seemed very unwilling to take the initiative.

He made way for her to pass without any further protest, and Linda, who well

remembered the way (was she likely ever to forget any detail of that day when she first spoke to Juliet Vane?) went down the dingy passage to the door. She knocked at it, and then stood waiting, a little flushed, very excited. More intensely real than ever did it seem to her that her brain was literally fire, her heart ice. No answer came, and, without waiting long, she knocked again impatiently. Still no answer. But suddenly the door was flung wide open, and Heywood stood on the threshold, evidently in a towering rage.

“Who the—” he began, but stopped short when he saw who his visitor was. “Mrs Denvil?” he said in surprise.

She quickly entered the room without waiting to be invited, and closed the door.

“Maurice Denvil is going to run away to-night,” she said in a low voice, which

arrested his attention at once. "He is off to Australia."

"Who told you so?"

"Never mind who told me. I know it. I have seen it in his own handwriting."

"And is *she* off too?"

"No; she knows nothing about it."

"What! is he deserting her, as he did you?"

"Yes—to escape you this time."

"I swear he sha'n't," cried Heywood, on whom the words produced just the effect she intended. "I'll prevent that if I have to tie him up like a dog! But how can I do it? Where is he? To-night did you say?"

"Yes—to-night—immediately. I have hurried here to tell you," said Linda quickly, seeing the wild light come into his eyes.

"The cur!—he stole her from me. I

don't care about *his* contract—he was only a pretty fellow at the best, a handsome boy, such as one might find any day by looking—but she! a queen! a creature that would fill the theatre always; and he stole her from me like that, and now hopes to shirk the consequences! No! not while Arthur Heywood lives! Have you told me the truth? Do you know where he is?”

“I can take you straight to him,” said Linda, delighted to see him lashing himself into this fury, “but you must come at once, or he will have gone.”

“Gone! my God!” cried Heywood, snatching up his hat. Suddenly he stopped and glared at Linda. “Where is *she*?” he demanded. “Is this some trick, I wonder? Are you helping her to get away? Because, let me tell you, I'll follow her to the world's end to get her life's blood from her. She shall work, and work for me,

like a slave, I tell you. If you are trying some trick it will only be the worse for all of you—so tell me the truth!”

“Is it likely I should try to help *her*?” asked Linda in a tone of such cold hatred that it convinced Heywood, excited though he was.

Shrewdness was strangely mingled with incipient madness in this man—strangely, but not rarely; the mixture is not unusual, though perplexing enough to those who have to deal with it.

“Well, come on,” he said roughly, “I’ll believe you. You say you can take me to Denvil now?”

“I can and will,” answered Linda.

They went out, and to the amazement of the stage doorkeeper and of one or two loiterers about the stage-door, took a passing hansom and drove off together. Linda quickly gave the driver the name

of the hotel, and got in, Heywood following her. She put her hand to her side. Yes, her heart was still ice. Would nothing ever warm it again? No; after to-night, nothing. She felt that instinctively; and leaned back in the cab, feeling dead to everything but the fulfilling of her purpose of the moment.

Their horse was, fortunately for them, a quick one; and in a quarter of an hour they had arrived at the door of the great hotel. Linda had decided on her course of action. She got out instantly and went in at the door, leaving Heywood to follow her. She asked at once for Mr Denvil. As Denvil had not feared any unexpected visitors he had given no orders for such an emergency as this, and a waiter immediately came forward and said,—

“Yes, Madame, Mr Denvil is in room 20. Kindly follow me.”

A moment later and Linda was slowly mounting the softly-carpeted stairs, the waiter in front of her, Heywood at her elbow. She began to feel like the instrument of fate—to ask herself wonderingly why she had come here. Was it really to please herself? But before her purpose had time to change or falter they were at the door of Room 20, and it was open, and they could hear Denvil's voice. They heard him tell the waiter he wished to see no one. He could not be disturbed, and then, before Linda quite understood what was happening, Heywood had entered the room, and the two men were face to face. The waiter backed out, glad to get into the passage again, for he saw some kind of storm was on hand; but Linda pushed open the door as he closed it, and entered.

Denvil stood by the table with the face

of an animal at bay. A portmanteau and a dressing-case were on the table; a travelling ulster on the chair he had risen from. He had just paid the bill for his dinner, and the use of this room for two or three hours, and was ready to go. He had received Mrs Felix Fairweather's messenger here, and in the first startled moment his right hand had gone to the breast coat-pocket in which were the precious notes that would carry him away to freedom and a new life. But when he met Heywood's eyes his hand dropped. There was something in that face which made him forget everything else—a wild glare was in those cold, glittering, blue eyes. He had not struggled on the stage with Heywood so often without seeing that glare before in moments of excitement, and he had often wondered whether the man would go mad some night in that

scene and kill him on the stage. He had pictured that moment to himself more than once, and considered how best to meet it. Had it come now? So unexpectedly? Heywood's wild eyes glanced quickly over the travelling preparations, and then caught a slight movement of Denvil's towards the door.

“No!” he exclaimed, “you will not escape me like that; don't imagine it. I am here to stop you from running away, my friend. I'm told you are off to Australia.”

“Who told you!” exclaimed Denvil, completely taken aback. He could only wonder whether he was a puppet in some fiendish plot of the Fairweather's—he was bewildered.

“The lady who brought me here, and who I suppose has a right to know your affairs—your wife.”

“My wife,” cried Denvil, and turned, expecting to see Juliet. When, instead, his eyes fell upon Linda, he shrank back a step or two, as if from some wild beast. “What,” he said, almost in a whisper, “it is *you*—this is *your* revenge!”

“And mine,” cried Heywood. “You have nearly ruined me once; you sha’n’t escape me again. So, you pretty fellow, you were actually going to run away from your beautiful Juliet. Let me take you quietly home to her. She will be wondering you are so late.” He advanced and seized Denvil’s arm. Denvil tried to shake him off, and in an instant Heywood sprang at his throat. A silent struggle followed; the men were well matched, as Linda knew. Heywood was wiry enough to withstand Denvil’s strength, and by sheer endurance refuse to be beaten. But Linda saw, after a moment,

that Heywood was not actually struggling, but was endeavouring to free one hand. What was he trying to do—she could not guess—and she was bewildered by a glimpse of his face, which was aflame with the glare of insanity, and hardly recognisable. Suddenly, by an effort, he wrenched himself free. Denvil, seizing the opportunity, darted to the door. As he did so there was the sound of a shot—a momentary blaze—a faint smoke. Linda, startled out of her unnatural self-possession, covered her eyes and shrank back against the wall. Complete silence followed—until she heard the sound of a low laugh. Nerving herself she dropped her hands and looked about her.

Heywood was sitting at the table opening Denvil's dressing-case, and laughing as he looked at its fittings with childish pleasure. After a shuddering

glance at him Linda averted her gaze with horror. She saw he was mad, no trace of reason was to be seen in that hideous face, all marked and scared, though it was with lines of cunning and shrewdness.

On the floor by the door lay Denvil, strangely still. She saw some blood trickling slowly on to the carpet. Her eyes dilated as she looked at him—she made a step forward, then drew back. How long she might have stood like this none can tell; but the dreadful silence was broken by the door being pushed open with some difficulty, for Denvil's body lay against it. Two policemen entered.

The waiter's report of the quarrel in Room 20, and the report of the pistol had induced the manager to promptly summon two policemen who were in the street.

He followed them to the door, and, after a glance at the scene in the room, went to summon a doctor who was in the hotel. The two policemen looked at Heywood, and at each other. Then one of them stepped to the window, threw it up, and blew his whistle. By the time the doctor had gently moved Denvil's body, and pronounced him dead, shot through the heart, half-a-dozen constables were in the room, and Heywood was handcuffed. Linda, who was absorbed in her contemplation of Denvil's face, which looked inexpressibly beautiful as he lay there, scarcely noticed that a policeman stationed himself on either side of her. She was saying to herself over and over again, "I am glad he is dead! I am glad he is dead!"

And this was the news that was brought to Juliet at Holloway. They

found the letter addressed to her in Denvil's pocket-book, and a messenger was sent to her with it, and to tell her what had happened.

## CHAPTER XII.

“There sat the shadow feared of man.”

GRAHAM kept the messenger in the little hall till she had learned all he could tell of the tragedy. She was just turning with the letter in her hand to go back to the parlour, when the door opened and Juliet came out. She was very pale.

“What is it, Graham?” she said. “I am sure something has happened to Maurice. What is it?” She looked at the messenger and saw something in his face that answered her question. “He is dead,” she cried out, “or dying. I must go to him at once. Don’t detain me, Graham.”

“It’s no use, Miss, indeed, now,” said

Graham, giving an appealing look to the man.

“No use,” he said, “the room’s locked and the police have sealed up the door.”

“WHAT!” cried Juliet. “Ah, then he’s dead,” she said with sudden calmness. Then she turned on the man so suddenly that he was startled. “Tell me all about it?” she said.

And he told her as well as he could. But the story seemed inexplicable to Juliet. From the man’s description neither she nor Graham could make out who the lady was that figured in the tragedy. Heywood was more easily described, and they both concluded he was the murderer who had gone mad. But the motive of the murder remained utterly unexplained.

Presently Juliet said,—

“You live at the hotel?”

“Yes,” said the man, “I am there all

the day. It was I showed the lady and gentleman up. I've got to be a witness at the trial.

"Can you let me know directly I can be admitted to the room?"

"Yes, I'll send you a wire, ma'am, the minute I know. But you'll have the police here first thing in the morning, and no doubt they will tell you."

"I shall trust to you," said Juliet.

She took some money from her pocket and gave it him, without reflecting or realising that it was all that she had.

After a glance at it, the man said fervently,—

"You may, ma'am," and with a good-night to Graham he hurried off.

The two were left standing in the little hall.

"I am doomed to be haunted by the police," said Juliet, absently. Then sud-

denly she said, "Graham, do you think that man told a made-up story, to get money perhaps? Maurice can't be dead, it isn't possible!"

"It's true, Miss," said Graham, from whose old eyes some slow tears trickled; not for Denvil, but for her young lady's pain. She had listened with attention to all the detail of the man's story, and she knew it was true.

"True!" echoed Juliet. "Is it possible? Dead! and I loved him so!"

She went back into the parlour and sat down on the chair she had risen from but a little while since, before this awful thing came into her life. She sat down and looked blankly before her, like one absorbed in thought. Presently she shook her head.

"No, Graham," she said, "it can't be. It isn't possible. I can't live without him.

Oh, Graham, that dread that has weighed on me all day! Can it have come true?’

She did not weep or moan; she grew more silent as an awful conviction of the truth of this thing, which at first had appeared incredible, settled in on her. Half the night passed like this. Graham sat on a chair by the wall, weeping softly. She had no idea what to do. She wished for the morning, that Juliet might be permitted to see the dead. She thought that sight surely would break this awful state.

The letter from Denvil, which he had intended to post on his way to the station, lay on the table, unnoticed. Graham had put it there but said nothing. She felt unequal to cope in any way with the awful grief she saw before her, a grief which seemed to be born, and to grow visibly into its greatness before her eyes.

She could only wait. How the time passed she did not know. She sat there, helpless, afraid. Juliet, her head on her hand, talked a little from time to time. She was like one who is visibly struggling with a great physical agony.

At last Graham heard a sound which told her the dawn had come. She rose and drew the curtains open, thinking any change would be a relief. A faint ray of morning light fell on to the table and made the candles look dim and yellow. Juliet caught sight of the letter upon which it fell. She leaned forward and took it in her hand. Slowly she opened it, with that awe which a message from the dead always inspires. Graham crept away, intending to make some tea, and hoping when she came back to find Juliet in tears. She was kneeling before her kitchen fire, nursing it into flame, when

she was startled by hearing a low laugh. It seemed so unnatural, a sound at such a time that she hurried into the parlour, full of fear. Juliet was sitting in the same place, with the letter lying open on the table before her. She looked up with a smile as Graham entered.

“He was leaving me, Graham! Leaving me because he feared debt and difficulty. That was what his love was worth. For such men we women lay our lives waste.”

Her head fell forward on the table. She had fallen into merciful unconsciousness.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN THE DARKNESS.

JULIET never saw her dead husband's face. Others stood round his body and marvelled at the beauty of that countenance to which the death-smile gave an extraordinary sweetness, greater than it had ever worn in life. But Juliet lay in her bed, delirious, thinking he was with her, and with her heart so painfully affected that she could not move without distress. The letter which Graham thought might bring her the salvation of tears had proved a greater blow than even the news of his death.

Graham sent to Lord Francis in the middle of the day after the murder; for

she scarcely thought Juliet would live, and the doctor looked very grave about it.

Lord Francis came at once. He glanced round the little parlour curiously. In its narrow primness it was so unlike anything he was accustomed to, that it was droll to see there certain little souvenirs of Marguerite Vane, which Graham had bought at the sale.

He had been admitted by Graham's one little servant. She herself came to him now, quickly, her aged face grey with anxiety.

"I am so glad you have come, my lord," she said, "for she is very ill."

"Let me see her first of all," said Lord Francis.

So Graham led the way upstairs.

Juliet lay in the old-fashioned bed with its old-fashioned dimity furnishing, looking like an exotic flower placed in a

cottage garden. Her beautiful hair was tossed over the pillow, on her cheeks were two brilliant spots of crimson. Her lips were red, though parched. She looked very lovely. She took Lord Francis for Denvil, and began to talk to him, under the impression she was back in the halcyon days in Italy. It was pitiful. Even Lord Francis, who flattered himself he was made of steel, could not bear it.

“Oh, these unhappy women that love in earnest! These women with hearts A misery to themselves and everyone else. She is her mother over again, but, positively, I think the type is more marked in her. Strange that she should be my child. Graham, come downstairs again. I want to talk to you about one or two things.”

The result of the conversation downstairs was that Graham fetched from

Juliet's room Denvil's writing case, which was too large to admit of his carrying it away, and with Graham in the room Lord Francis forced it open and looked the papers through. At last he found what he wanted.

“Yes,” he said, “it is as I thought. He dropped me a hint about it once, when he was first thinking of Juliet. He was insured for three thousand pounds. I will put in the claim at once. I can free her now from Ferguson and those other fiends, at all events for the moment, and give you money to get all that is necessary for her.”

Graham felt this to be a relief, for she saw the only hope for Juliet was for her to have some peace, and not be haunted by duns the moment she began to recover. And she herself was not rich; she had only the little savings of her past to live

on, and the savings of a ladies' maid are not like those of a housekeeper. But now this anxiety was at an end, and she went back to her watch by Juliet's bed, glad to think it was so.

Lord Francis took with him the various blue papers which had been handed to Juliet since her return to England, and drove back into town. He shook his head as he looked at these papers.

“What a wretch Victoria is!” he thought. “She must be punished, yet *I* cannot do it, especially now, when my fortunes are about to turn. I hope Juliet will do it when she is well again. She has spirit enough for anything of the sort, if only her interest can be roused.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

“So tired, so tired, my heart and I!”

BUT it was many a long day before Juliet took any interest in anything. And yet, to the outer world, which is always so ignorant, it seemed that she recovered very quickly from her grief—for, within four months after Maurice Denvil's death, she was on the stage playing at a London theatre.

Her illness lasted three weeks — three weeks of weary fever and pain which seemed like an eternity. She got up, pale, quiet, cold. It was strange, but, as a matter of fact, she had never grieved for Denvil, in the ordinary sense, after the first few hours. His letter of farewell,

apologetic, begging for forgiveness, full of self-justification, was a blow so great as almost to destroy her reason. She recovered from it sane and sound, but the wings of her spirit were broken. Her idol had been dethroned before she had been able to weep out her grief. The tears which had been left unshed were still at her heart. She was not frozen, like Linda, but utterly weary. The joy and hope of her youth had gone from her, and she knew not how to live on. It seemed a terrible burden this life she had to live out, not only without her love, but without its memory; for, in the light of the knowledge that Denvil's letter gave her, it seemed to her that he never could have loved her, that it must have been all a dream. She was unable to understand such love as his, which is simply passion transfigured for the hour into a greatness not its own.

Of course, Denvil's death and Heywood's trial excited great public interest, and the papers were full of such information as could be gathered about all the persons concerned in the tragedy. Thus everyone was aware now that Juliet was Denvil's wife. She had cared, such a little while before, that this should be known, and now she did not seem to care at all!

All her difficulties were swept away, more or less, by Denvil's death. With the insurance money Lord Francis had satisfied her creditors sufficiently to leave her in freedom for the time being, though not completely, for Ferguson's was a heavy claim, and Heywood's relations took up the matter of Juliet's broken contract. Heywood was imprisoned as a criminal lunatic, and his brother, who was nearly as irritable as himself, took all his affairs in hand, and promised to be an excellent

fighter, if nothing else. He was anxious to go to law.

Meantime, Juliet was freed from all immediate embarrassments. She stayed on in Graham's little house, which seemed like a home to her; and, when she rose from her bed and came downstairs, she sat listlessly in the little parlour, doing nothing, apparently thinking nothing. She was plunged in a lethargy from which nothing roused her.

Lord Francis was married during this time. He had made a great match, both socially, politically and financially. But he had explained very clearly to Juliet that he could do nothing for her, as his wife's great fortune was settled absolutely on herself. He had sailed into smooth waters late in the day, and looked forward to an excellent conclusion to his career. For Juliet he had done all that

lay in his power, however; so he told her. And he believed that he was freed from Victoria Elwood, for he felt certain that she had stolen all the valuable things which had disappeared from the shop in Bond Street, and he concluded she would spend her ill-gotten gains in obscurity, without taking any unnecessary risks. So that Lord Francis was well content, and felt that he was now attaining the secure comfort which he so richly deserved.

Juliet was introduced to the great lady who was to be her father's wife before the wedding. This lady, a spinster, neither young nor old, but handsome, and a thorough woman of the world, who was simply marrying for a title and certain political reasons, regarded the stricken young widow with wondering eyes. She was of the temperament to which love, passion, grief, all alike seem maladies of the mind.

Juliet's character was beyond her comprehension, and she concluded that artists must be very emotional people, and that, consequently, they suffered more than others.

Juliet was glad that her mourning spared her the necessity of taking any part in the ceremonial of the wedding, which was a very grand affair indeed. She sat more quietly than ever that day in Graham's little parlour, thinking of her dead.

After that, the days went quietly on. She saw no one, spoke to no one but the old servant. She seemed to have no thought or care about her future, she simply went on aimlessly with her existence.

Graham longed for something, even a fresh trouble, to break in upon this dreadful apathy.

Something came at last. One day a hansom drove up to the door, and out of it got a bright-eyed, soberly-dressed, little, middle-aged lady, who asked for Miss Juliet Vane. She gave a name which Juliet recognised at once as that of a well-known novelist and playwright. This modest-looking little lady, who would have passed anywhere for the wife of a country clergyman, was a brilliant writer, and now an energetic theatrical manager. And, moreover, she was a real woman. One glance at Juliet showed her what she had to deal with. She put her arms round her and kissed her.

“My dear,” she said, “we know each other’s names so well, it is just as if we were old friends. And you have had such troubles! So have I. I am alone in the world—husband, children, all dead before me. These things are hard to bear.

There's only one way to ease a sore heart, and that's by hard work. That's why I've gone on at it. I should go mad if I were to sit down and think!"

She sat by Juliet, keeping her hand in a firm though gentle grasp. "Poor girl!" she thought to herself, "she looks like one who has not a friend in the world." She went on talking, relating how she had made an unlucky speculation in New York, where she had been managing a theatre, and lost a great deal of money; how she had thereupon shut herself up for three months and written a new play, and had come to London to make another venture with it.

"I believe it will succeed, my dear!" she said, enthusiastically. "It is sad, sad, sad! the people *must* cry, and in a theatre they must either laugh or cry, one or the other; nothing half-way is any

real use. This time I determined to strike the note of pathos down to its full depth, and I believe I've done it. I've got my theatre; but I refused to sign the contract till I was sure of the actress for my heroine. Now, the question is, will you play it? If so, I'll drive back at once and sign for the theatre."

"I!" exclaimed Juliet, thoroughly surprised. "But surely you don't know my position?"

"With Heywood? Oh, yes, I know all about it. I have seen his brother, and if you will come to me I will undertake the whole management of that affair. I have pointed out to him that it will pay him much more certainly to let you take another engagement, and pay him off. As a matter of fact, I have to engage you from him; but I do so on the condition that enough is paid you out of your

salary for you to live in comfort. Take the advice of an old woman, my dear, and work off your misery. You will be very glad by and by to have used this wretched time in freeing yourself from an embarrassment which otherwise may hamper you when you want to be free. Now, let me tell you about the play."

She talked for nearly an hour, and at the end of it drove away to sign the lease of her theatre. Graham, coming into the room, found Juliet with a faint flush in her cheeks. She had forgotten herself for the moment, and was thinking of her new *rôle*.

"I am going back to the stage, Graham!" she said. "Mrs Belmont has persuaded me to."

"Oh, I am thankful, Miss Juliet!" exclaimed Graham, who clung to the old name in spite of Juliet's widow's dress.

But this came to be regarded as quite natural, for Juliet had to go back to her professional life under her old name, and was soon accustomed to be always called by it. "Anything is better," went on Graham, "than sitting here as you have been sitting, doing nothing. I am thankful!"

And so, at the end of February, Juliet Vane was playing again to the familiar London audiences, to densely packed houses which welcomed her return to the stage with wild enthusiasm. Mrs Belmont had done a good stroke of business in securing Juliet for her new play, as she saw directly she advertised the fact. The seats for the first week were all bought in a day. The first night's reception was something extraordinary; and the play would have had to be bad indeed not to have succeeded. The audience was not composed of critics, but of an excitable

public eager to welcome back an old favourite whose private story was intimately known to everyone of them. Juliet was popular and notorious both.

Fortunately, the play was a good one. Juliet's powers were immensely advanced by the experience she had passed through, and she gave Mrs Belmont's note of pathos perfectly. Before the first act was over the house had arrived at an abject state of emotion; all the lace pocket-handkerchiefs were wet through, and the men all discovered they had bad colds. Mrs Belmont was right; the effect of a play should be a little hysterical, one way or the other. People should either laugh or cry themselves weary; they recognise then that they have been touched. They soon become bored by incomplete emotions. The play ended in a death-scene, in which Juliet showed power and capacity that

had not been suspected in her before. The play was a triumphant success; loaded with flowers, weary with triumph, Juliet went back to her dressing-room, while the audience, having given the utmost demonstration possible, left the house, shaken by emotion. The laughter was all the gayer at many a merry little supper party for the reaction of feeling. But the play was not readily forgotten. "How sad, how sad, how sad!" the people said, "and how wonderful she is!"

And Juliet, in her dressing-room, was weeping wild tears—the first tears that had come to her since Denvil's death.

"Oh, my heart, my heart!" she cried. "I can't bear the pain!"

Mrs Belmont came into the room and looked anxiously at Graham.

"It's all right, ma'am," said the old servant. "It will save her."

## CHAPTER XV.

“ Like a man’s laughter heard in hell.”

IT seemed incongruous for the most popular and successful actress of the day to live in a little house at Holloway with no companion but an old servant. Yet nothing would tempt Juliet to alter her way of living. Mrs Belmont asked her to come and live with her; but Juliet preferred the quietness of her obscure home. She would neither receive nor visit; she would not even go to any of Mrs Belmont’s receptions. This was quite a disappointment to that bright little lady, for the literary and artistic world which crowded into her rooms on Sunday evenings would have been delighted indeed to

welcome Juliet. And Mrs Belmont thought she needed friends. She was right; but it was impossible to induce Juliet to go among people. She had lost her faith in human nature, and with that loss her interest in it had died too. There are some persons who are capable of love without respect; to others this is impossible. Juliet belonged to the latter order. Where she lost her respect for a person her love died too. She was affected in the same manner towards the whole race by what she had passed through. This is an infirmity peculiar to noble minds, but still an infirmity—a Byronic despair which is really a disorder. It is one of those miseries which must be suffered in solitude; it will not bear talking about. And it is practically incurable; time alone vanquishes it. The mind at last grows weary of its own sophistries, or, perhaps,

some accident reveals to it that the other side of human life still exists.

Juliet knew it was useless to go into ordinary society; she was stricken too deeply. She suspected everyone. Even kind Mrs Belmont could not quite disarm her. She told herself that the manageress was but consulting her own interests in being kind, which was true enough, of course, but only a half-truth. As for entering a drawing-room and laying herself open once more to the advances of lovers, with their various methods and manners—that she shrank from absolutely. Man had become to her simply an object of suspicion. She was unapproachable. From the time when she drove back to Holloway in her little brougham after the theatre, to the time when she drove into town again, she was the widow in her solitude, obscure, undisturbed. Her life

was divided absolutely into two parts. When she put on her black dress after the play she put off the successful actress and became the solitary, disillusioned woman. To Mrs Belmont and to Graham, the only two persons who saw anything of her private life, it seemed an awful existence for one so young. But the blight that had fallen on Juliet's spirit was quite a different thing from grief, and could not be chased away in the same manner. The suffering of the heart exhausts itself, becomes deadened; but mental pain often seems to increase in acuteness by its own action.

Her mode of life seemed most extraordinary and mysterious to the world in general. Often quite a little crowd of admirers waited at the stage door to watch her cross the pavement to her brougham. The more absolute her retire-

ment, the more acute was the curiosity felt about her. She might have surrounded herself by a court of worshippers had she chosen ; but the triumph which would have been a triumph indeed to many women to her was repugnant. She hated the men and the way they looked at her. She would sometimes single out an admirer, whose face she saw often enough to become familiar with it, and would say to herself, "What woman is he deceiving now? Is it his wife? Or is it some poor creature who thinks he loves her better than any wife?"

So the days went by, and the weeks and the months; the play held its place right into the London season. When London began to fill they gave two matinées a week. Juliet seemed to be incapable of fatigue; she was in that unnatural state when the torment of the

mind is relieved by actual work, when work is the only rest possible. But for the ever-recurring necessity of rousing herself to the dramatic effort she would have sunk under the sense of the uselessness of her life, overwhelmed by the void she dwelled in. But the work carried her on, and youth and strength gave her the power to do it. She was free from all violent emotions now, and the quiet of her days restored her health.

One day in June a cab drove up to the door of the little house, and a visitor demanded admittance very resolutely. "Tell Miss Vane I have some news for her," she heard a sufficiently familiar voice say at the door. She had seen from the window that it was Lord Mannering who thus invaded her solitude. She hesitated for a moment. Should she see him? Graham came in to ask her, and

saw the hesitation in Juliet's expressive eyes.

"I think, Miss," said Graham, "he really has something to tell you. He was always a straightforward gentleman."

This decided Juliet, and Mannering was shown in. His stalwart figure looked out of place in the little room. He was unchanged, looking neither older nor in any way altered, save for a new line, very clear and marked, on his forehead. He had either learned or suffered something since Juliet saw him last.

"I know you don't receive now, Miss Vane," he said, using her professional name as a matter of course. "Mrs Belmont told me so. But I wanted to see you about some business of your own, so please excuse my calling. I only arrived last night from Berlin, where I met by accident a mutual acquaintance—Mrs Elwood."

“Mrs Elwood!” exclaimed Juliet, “I thought she was still in Paris.”

“No, I made some inquiries in Paris, and I find she left there directly the surveillance of the police ceased. Naturally, when you began to pay off the debts, Ferguson took no further interest in her. You see I know all the history. If you had been wise, you would then have had her watched yourself. However, all's well that ends well. I have been playing amateur detective on your behalf; but it was accident, or fate, that gave me the opportunity to do so. I was in a large jeweller's shop in Berlin when I recognised Mrs Elwood. I saw her pass through the shop and enter the manager's room. I at once guessed what was going on, and inquiry showed I was right. She was selling, not buying. I went straight to the police. To make a long

story short, one of the Berlin firm came over to London with me, and this morning showed the jewels to Ferguson, who identified them. Mrs Elwood is being watched by the Berlin police; so we have her safe. But I want her punished, and nobody can do that but you."

Juliet had flushed and paled as she listened. "How wicked—how treacherous," she said to herself. "It does not seem possible!"

"Tell me," she said abruptly. "Why have you taken so much trouble?"

"Oh, I have a sportsman's liking for fair play," said Mannering in his dogged manner. "I don't see why you should work to pay for things that woman has stolen. Now, I want you to authorise the police to act. I want her brought over here and tried, the whole case gone into, and your name cleared entirely, as it will

be. For that wretched affair was too much talked about."

"But why should you care?" she said. "I hardly care now! It is so long past!"

"That is just what I expected you to say. And will you sit tamely down under the treachery of that creature, whom I know you treated as if she were your own sister? It is possible to carry quixotism too far."

Juliet winced a little at these words. They reminded her of so much that Denvil had said to her. He too had called her a Don Quixote; and both men, so utterly different in character and views, seemed to think it a severe reproach. She felt that all her sacrifices hitherto had been worse than wasted. A year ago she would have refused to prosecute Victoria Elwood; she would have remembered all her sad, despairing words about her life,

and the injustices she had suffered from, and would have excused her. But she was changed. She saw that she had failed cruelly in her relations with Linda and Denvil; that it would have been better to have acted as a woman of the world would have done. This is a hard lesson for the idealist to learn.

“I suppose you are right,” she said. “I will do what you wish in this matter. What have I to do?”

He arranged to send the Berlin jeweller and an official from Scotland Yard to her later in the day; and then, without touching on any other subject, said good-bye and went away.

“He is just the same as ever,” thought Juliet. “Perhaps more abrupt and dogmatic. With the kindest and truest nature possible he will never be happy, because he has not the power to give happiness.”

And then she thought of the fatal charm of the man she had loved, and her heart turned cold within her.

She made one stipulation — that she should herself see Mrs Elwood on her arrival in London, and alone, before any further steps were taken. She had a lingering hope that there would be some explanation to offer, something to say which would alter the present aspect of things. And Juliet felt that she herself was the right person to try and win such confidence; that there are many things one woman will say to another which cannot be said in a court of law to a judge.

In obedience to this wish Mrs Elwood was brought up to Juliet's house one day a week later, in custody; that is to say, accompanied by a quiet, gentlemanly man, who was with some little difficulty induced to let Mrs Elwood go upstairs alone to

Juliet's own room. Eventually, as it was manifestly impossible for her to make any unexpected escape from an upper window he felt that he was executing his duty sufficiently by sitting in the little parlour with the door open so that he commanded the staircase. Juliet had a little dressing-room over the narrow hall, which she had converted into a sanctum for study and reading. She came here when she wanted to be free even from Graham's unobtrusive companionship, when she wanted to feel safe from any wish of unexpected visitors—when in fact she wished to be utterly alone with her own thoughts. She chose to receive Victoria Elwood here, as she knew they would be safe from any intrusion. She was standing by her little writing-table when the door was opened. Mrs Elwood came in and the door was shut upon her.

Juliet turned quickly and looked at her. At the first glance she saw she had changed; or, rather, she had crystallised, hardened, into something that seemed like the stone image of her former self. Her mouth was rigid, and it seemed impossible that it could ever have worn the sweet smile which used to sometimes illumine her face. The great black eyes were bold and defiant; widely opened, and, if anything, more direct and seemingly honest in their regard than ever. She wore a plain black jacket and a small travelling hat, in which costume she looked exactly like a young man.

The two women looked at each other with keen scrutiny. Mrs Elwood remained standing by the door and made no attempt to speak. Juliet, after a long look at her, advanced a step and said,—

“Mrs Elwood, I wanted to see you alone before this miserable affair goes any further, for I thought you might have something to say to me. I find it very hard to believe you guilty!”

“Well, thanks to Mannering, “said Mrs Elwood, deliberately, “who is a great deal cleverer than he looks, it has all been found out; so it’s no use my attempting to deny anything, even if you are still so full of the milk of human kindness as to be willing to help me.”

There was a sneer in her tone which annoyed Juliet. She began to feel that possibly charity might be quite out of place here.

“What made you abuse my confidence as you did?” she asked in a low voice that quivered with indignation. “What made you buy all those things, and place me in such a terrible position?”

“I did not intend to go such lengths at first,” said Mrs Elwood, offering her explanation quite coolly, “for I had no idea I could get so much credit. But when I found I could, I thought I had better reap a harvest as quickly as possible. I intended to go off at the first opportunity, before any inquiries were made or payments demanded. When the news of your death was telegraphed to town I cleared the place that instant, and left the country before anyone gave a thought to the matter.”

“You *intended* to go off at the first opportunity! You intended to steal these things, and cause me all this pain and trouble and debt? Had I not done my best for you? Why should you repay me in such a way?”

“Because I hated you,” said Mrs Elwood bitterly.

“Hated me?” repeated Juliet, who was surprised at this avowal; “but why? What had I done to you?”

“I hated you because you had everything and I nothing. What was there before me if I did not do something for myself? No one put me on the stage or brought lords to propose marriage to me! You had the beauty and genius, the friends and the lovers; you had the world at your feet. While I could be nothing better than the poor companion to my own sister, and the spy and tool of a father who was ashamed to acknowledge me.

“What do you mean?” exclaimed Juliet.

“It is very simple. You need not look so bewildered. I am your sister. Lord Francis Ellerton is my father as well as yours. The only difference is that he did not marry my mother, though she loved him twice as well, and pleased him

twice as well as ever Marguerite Vane did. That is just like the justice of this world! And so, though he soon tired of Marguerite Vane and came back to my mother, it is Marguerite Vane's child who gets every advantage, who is acknowledged and launched in the world. And why? Simply because her mother was more worldly-minded and more experienced in the world's ways than mine!"

No words can describe the concentrated bitterness with which this speech was uttered. Juliet shrank back as if from a blow.

"You call my mother worldly because she could only be won by marriage?" she said, so perplexed as to be unable to reply.

"Of course I do," cried Mrs Elwood, with fierce defiance, "and so would everybody if there were any justice in the

world. She knew her power and used it. Those are the women that get everything. And I, because I was the child of the woman who loved too passionately to think of worldly advantages, I am to be nothing and no one all my life. The world's justice, indeed, and now you, my own sister, who have had all the advantages which should have been shared between us, are sending me to prison for a few diamonds.

“How can you prove you are my sister?” demanded Juliet, still speaking in the low tone which was natural to her when very excited.

“Very easily. I have the proofs among my papers.”

“Where are they?”

“The police have seized all my belongings,” said Mrs Elwood, in a tone of subdued triumph. “There are some letters

there which Lord Francis would give a good deal for! How wretched he would be if he knew the police had them! Well, I shall have this consolation — if I suffer he will suffer too!”

Juliet suddenly said,—

“Was it *he* you spoke of when you told me how you hated your father?”

“Yes. It was Lord Francis. He is a contemptible coward, and I hate him. He used my mother cruelly; he has used me worse. I have been made an outcast and and a pariah for a fault that was not my own. That injustice has made me the thing I am. I have been cast out, and all I could do was to take what I could. He would have let me starve if luck had not given me a power over him — think of that! Knowing how he treated my mother, I have never trusted him an inch, or he would have begged these papers off

me long ago, and then cast me off entirely. I found them among my mother's things—the only inheritance she left me but that of shame. A lovely inheritance was it not? A mother's shame and a father's crime. Yes, he is a criminal, and if those papers are examined, nothing will save him. You need not start so. I suppose his courtly manner has deceived you as it has so many others. How I hate him! As for you there was a time when I could have loved you—could have been your friend—but you never trusted me. You never really liked me; and when I saw you falling in love with Denvil—when I saw you prefer even his jealous wife to me, I steeled my heart against you. It is impossible that anyone can be slighted always and not take revenge at last. Well! You wanted to hear what I might have to say to you. It is said."

She turned to the door as if to go.

“Stop!” cried Juliet. “Granted all you say is true—do you stand there and tell me you feel justified in having been so wicked and treacherous towards me, by the fact that your father ill-used you?”

“Justified!” exclaimed Mrs Elwood. She folded her arms across her breast and looked defiantly at Juliet. “I glory in what I have done. I wish it was ten times worse. I wish I had had a greater opportunity. Criminals are created by injustice, anarchists by oppression. Yes, I glory in it. And I delight in the knowledge that those letters of your father’s and mine will now become public property.”

She opened the door and went out of the room. Juliet stood still, listening to her step on the stairs; then she heard the front door open and close, and the cab which had been waiting drive away.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“Was Somebody asking to see the Soul?”

LORD FRANCIS ELLERTON lived now in one of the solid Grosvenor Square houses. He and his wife suited each other admirably; they had settled into a perfectly agreeable routine of life. They seldom met, except at dinner, and not always then unless they were going out or entertaining. Lord Francis was a perfectly contented man, and looked it, as he sat this afternoon in his favourite easy-chair reading a new French novel. Perhaps his only source of distress was his vanished youth; and he managed to forget that except when he looked in the glass and saw the wrinkles time was resolutely placing on his handsome face.

It was the peaceful hour before the dressing-bell rang. He had to go out to a diplomatic dinner that night; and was refreshing himself before his labours began by a dip into some agreeable fiction. He had lately begun to talk about keeping the mind young, even if the body aged. He was laughing to himself at what he was reading when a servant entered the room and said Miss Vane was there and wished to see him.

“Miss Vane!” he exclaimed in great surprise, for this was an unprecedented event, and he felt sure something must have happened. “Show her in here,” he said, and then rose to go and meet her himself. For Lord Francis never forgot to be courtly even when his words and thoughts were bitterest. And just now he was in excellent humour with himself and all the world, and inclined to be most agreeable.

Juliet came in. She was very quiet; but he saw she was agitated. As soon as the door was shut he said,—

“What is it?”

“I have just seen Mrs Elwood,” she said. “I had not told you about this before, for I have not met you. Lord Mannering saw Mrs Elwood in Berlin selling diamonds. She has been brought over. The jewels have been identified. The police seized all her belongings, and this afternoon she has told me that there are some papers among them very important to you.”

“*What!*” cried Lord Francis, “Has she let those out of her hands?”

“She could not help it; the police surprised her and seized everything.”

“Good heavens! what is to be done?”

Juliet turned and looked at him; hitherto she had spoken with her eyes averted. He was like a man suddenly aged. He

was standing, leaning on a chair; and the hand that held it trembled violently.

“You are afraid!” she said. “Then it is true!”

“What is true?” he asked, and as he did so passed one hand over his forehead, on which drops of moisture were standing.

Juliet made no answer. She saw all she wanted to know in his face.

“Is she your daughter?” she asked, after a moment's pause, almost inaudibly.

“Yes,” replied Lord Francis.

“And you left my mother for *her* mother?” she said, her eyes fixed on him.

“Why — yes — but that's an old story now! — terribly old. Why should it be raked up?”

“You left my mother for hers?” Juliet

repeated, in a tone which said,—to this I must have an answer.

“My dear Juliet,” said Lord Francis, with an effort to recover his usual manner, “her mother amused me — while yours — well, she bored me sometimes—as you do occasionally, also. She took everything *au sérieux*. Life is too short and too precious for that sort of thing.”

He began to walk up and down the room, evidently thinking of something very different from what he was talking about. Juliet sank into a chair, and continued to look at him in a sort of stupor of wonder.

“How my mother loved him!” she said to herself. “How she worshipped and loved him! This is the father I was taught to look on as the king of men!” she murmured, loud enough for him to hear. “Is there no true love, then?—

no honour—no honesty in the world—absolutely none!”

“My dear girl,” he said, irritably, “if you want that sort of thing, you must go to men like Mannering—dull fellows who know nothing about the art of living. I don’t say Mannering has no brains; he has plenty; but he is phlegmatic and impossible. Those are the men who are what you call true. It’s purely a matter of temperament. Are you determined to go on with the case against Victoria?—or can I persuade you to withdraw it?”

“I have already sent a telegram to say that I refuse to go on with the case,” she said quietly. “It is the only way to save you. I think we had better go and see that her effects are restored untouched. My brougham is at the door, and I have an hour to spare.”

“So have I—yes, just an hour,” said

Lord Francis, a look of inexpressible relief coming over his face. "Upon my word, Juliet, you are a good sort. You serious women always do the right thing, I must say that."

Without another word, or another glance, she went out of the room, and the house, and got into her little brougham. He followed her. All his courtly gaiety had returned, and he made some attempts at conversation. But Juliet could not speak. He eventually relapsed into silence also, with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "Women like this know how to do the right thing," he reflected; "but they are *difficile!*"

He returned to his house in a hansom, very late, but still in time to dress and go out to dinner, and he was quite himself again; the courtier, apparently gifted with perennial youth.

Juliet had not spoken to him; had not noticed his hand extended at parting. But that was nothing. He knew that, however much she might disapprove of him, she would be absolutely true. And Victoria Elwood had at last been disposed of. Her belongings had been handed over to Juliet, who simply gave the papers to her father, without a word or a look. The jewels found in Mrs Elwood's possession were sent to Mr Ferguson. And she herself was informed she was free on condition she left the country and caused no further trouble to Lord Francis or Juliet. This she agreed to, when she understood that her weapons had been taken from her. And so she passed out of Juliet's history. Money and influence had silenced and hushed up the close of this scandal; and thenceforward the sisters were as widely separated as though they had never met.

And Juliet went to her work at the theatre, feeling that life itself was far more unreal than any mimic show of it could be.

## CHAPTER XVII.

“ And all her body was more virtuous  
Than souls of women fashioned otherwise.”

THE season was over, and Mrs Belmont closed the doors of her theatre for three months.

Juliet, tired with triumph and weary of life, sat idly down in her small study and absently opened a book. She proposed to spend her holidays like this, reading, studying, and trying not to think.

But Mrs Belmont interfered. She drove up the day after the theatre was closed, and had quite a stormy interview with Juliet.

“ I cannot, I will not allow it ! ” she said resolutely. “ You are pale, all your beautiful colour is gone, your face is losing its

shape. It is simply wicked folly to throw away your youth like this. I don't want you to have society, or to go among people. I will not weary you with friends or admirers. You can put up with me for a few weeks. What you want is fresh air and a change out of this horrible great town, where the air is all exhausted. That is all I insist upon, but on that I do insist, and I don't intend to leave you till you have told Graham to pack up your things and her own, and settled to come away with me. You need not take any further trouble than that. I'll engage to take you to a place that will give you a colour in a week, and where you won't be stared at, for no one will know you. Better give in at once for I am quite determined. I mean to take you to the sea."

Thus tormented, Juliet gave in, and two days later Mrs Belmont and her maid,

Juliet and Graham were on the Ostende boat, steaming across a quiet, shining sea to that beautiful little wind-blown town. Mrs Belmont had decided on this place for various reasons. Once out of English-speaking countries, the name and face of an English actress are practically unknown; so that Juliet would not be followed, watched, stared at, as she might have been in England. Then Mrs Belmont knew well the health-giving properties of the wild wind off the German Ocean; and she thought the gay atmosphere of this pleasure resort would be mentally healthful for Juliet as well as agreeable to herself. For Mrs Belmont, who had seen and suffered many sorrows, had learned late in life to love gaiety. She made no affectation of youth; she was quite simple and straightforward; but she delighted in a bright atmosphere. And this they

found in perfection at Ostende. They arrived in brilliant weather; and though Juliet was dismayed by her first glance at the crowd of promenaders that filled the *digue*, yet she could not resist the invitation of the glorious sunshine and keen air, and was soon out among them. Mrs Belmont was content directly she saw Juliet go out. She relied on the air and sun to bring back the beauty she had feared to see wane.

In a few hours Juliet found herself fairly resigned to the crowd of idlers; she met no one she knew, and the sea and sky and air were so glorious as to give her a temporary forgetfulness. She came in to dinner with her eyes brighter than Mrs Belmont had ever seen. That lady was well pleased with her experiment. She would not have been quite so satisfied had she known that Lord Mannering had a

villa in Ostende, and a yacht lying idle in the channel. She had a wholesome fear of that nobleman, whom she held to be possessed of remarkable resolution and tenacity of purpose; and she did not want Juliet to marry. She thought the only danger lay in that quarter, therefore she would have been considerably dismayed if she could have followed Lord Mannering's movements after he had paid her an afternoon call, and learned from the servant at the door that she had gone with Miss Vane to Ostende. He immediately sent a telegram to his yacht to be in readiness, drove home and told his servant to pack up.

Belgians are early risers, but little old Madame Stuers had only just come downstairs to her coffee when the door bell rang loudly the very next morning. She went herself to the door, and before open-

ing it, looked through the grating of trellised woodwork.

“*Mon dieu!*” she exclaimed, “his lordship! and at this time of the year!”

She quickly opened the door, and Mannering went into the *salon* which was all covered up in brown holland; the balcony, which opened from it, was as closely shuttered as if it were mid-winter.

“I smell coffee,” said Mannering. “I’ll come into your room for a cup if you’ll allow me, Madame Stuers. And then I want the whole villa thrown open and the balcony filled with flowers. Perhaps I shall have some ladies to dinner to-day.

Madame Stuers was so excited she forgot all about her own coffee. Such a thing had never happened before in her time! She rejoiced to think that there were only the covers to take off; the house was kept with true Flemish nicety

and cleanliness. In a few minutes the *bonne* was sent into the town for help; and within an hour the great iron shutters had disappeared from the front of the villa and the promenaders paused in their loiterings to look at the beautiful *salle à manger* and pretty balcony thus exposed to their admiring gaze. A little later in the morning the balcony had become a dream of flowers; a telescope had been placed in their midst, and Mannering, in a grey morning coat and white silk shirt, sat there pretending to study the vessels out at sea, while really covertly watching the passing crowd. It surged right up to his balcony; from where he sat he could touch the people that passed if he chose. Faces of every sort passed by; but not the one he looked for. Every other type in the world seemed to be here, but that pure, strong outline, those steadfast eyes which were his ideal.

“She will not be among this crowd,” he thought at last, “I had better go and look for her on the sand.”

He sauntered out, stepping down through his balcony gateway, and loitered along by the sea-wall looking for her on every side. She was not to be seen, but presently, as he came near the *kurs*, he caught sight of Mrs Belmont sitting in its balcony, reading. She looked very contented. She was close to the railing, so Lord Mannering approached it and addressed her. She glanced quickly up from her book; and he saw the faint cloud of dismay flit over her face when she recognised him. Yet he showed to great advantage in his grey and white costume; the typical fresh, well-groomed Englishman who is known at a glance among a crowd of Russians, Germans and Frenchmen, such as now surrounded Mannering. He felt a pleased

amusement at having detected that cloud of dismay, which was instantly chased away and replaced by a smile of welcome.

“Does she think I have a chance?” he thought to himself.

“Here is a friend, Juliet!” cried Mrs Belmont, turning round; and then he saw a black-robed figure approaching them across the balcony. Juliet, the same Juliet, but thinner and paler, and her face veiled by a profound cloud of melancholy. She welcomed him kindly and gently, but without any interest. His heart sank. She had always been like this with him. He could not touch or rouse her.

He entered the *kursaal* and sat down by them. They formed a quiet party, but the languid heat made it seem natural to be so. Mrs Belmont presently returned to her book, Juliet seemed inclined to

sit idly looking at the sea, and Mannering relapsed into his usual taciturnity. It contented him only to look at Juliet.

When they separated for lunch he asked them to dine at the Villa Mimosa that evening. Mrs Belmont accepted with a little sigh of resignation; Juliet made no protest or remark. It was indifferent to her. She did Mannering the honour of not classing him with the general run of men, who make love to a beautiful actress as a mere matter of course. And she never dreamed of his speaking seriously to her again. She looked upon him as a friend simply. He took his cue, and dropped into the position of privileged friend immediately. After lunch he met them again, and again attached himself to them. In the evening they walked along the *digue* to the Villa Mimosa, where Madame Stuers had prepared a delightful little

dinner. It was very pleasant here in the quiet, beautifully-decorated room, filled with the scent of flowers. Even Juliet thought it pleasanter than dining at the hotel. Later on Mannering persuaded them to go to the *kursaal* again. Not that Mrs Belmont wanted persuading; she had been longing to go every evening, but Juliet had always refused. She agreed now from lack of resolution to refuse; when Mannering wanted a thing he was so much in earnest about it that she yielded because she was not sufficiently interested to stand against him. So they went. Mannering's secret object was one which would have surprised his most intimate friends. He wanted to dance with Juliet. He had never danced in a London drawing-room and had acquired the, to him, agreeable reputation of not being a dancing man. He considered it much too

dangerous an amusement in society for a man who was one of the best matches of the day. But with Juliet—here among a crowd of strangers, where it would seem as if they were alone in the dream of motion!—for Mannering was, like most men of his build, a superb dancer—this he coveted.

They went into the rooms, listened a little while to the music, looked a little while at the gambling, and then went into the ball-room. A divine waltz was being played—the admirable floor made one long to dance. He turned to Juliet quickly, but suddenly something in her face silenced him. He dared not ask her. In a few moments, with one accord, they turned and left the *kursaal*, going out into the warm night air. And as he stood by her side, looking over the dark sea, he understood

that if he won Juliet it would not  
be the Juliet he had first loved,  
but a woman for whom joy was  
dead.

## CHAPTER XVIII

“Love is not for me and you !  
Let us be the best of friends—  
But do not let us love !”

THIS life went on for some weeks ; a life of perfect physical and mental rest. The two women, in their different ways, had become accustomed to Mannering's companionship. He was continually with them ; but he was so quiet, so unobtrusive, and added so much to their gentle pleasures that they were surprised to think they had ever done without him.

And Mannering asked himself, day after day, the same question. Could he be content to be her friend ? And he always found the same answer,—No, a

thousand times no. He had fully realised, in this daily contact, the change in her. It is wonderful how well people get to know each other in these pleasure-places, where there is none of the business of life to break up and interrupt the intimacy. Juliet had begun to think of Manner-  
ing as a woman thinks of a brother; she understood his moods and humours, and laughed a little at him sometimes. But she never suspected that under that quiet, brotherly exterior a fierce fire was burning; that this strong man longed with all the force of his nature to take her to himself and make her his own. He saw perfectly how she was altered; how her young gladness had all gone. He tested his love by his recognition of that change; he tested it by his perfect recognition of the fact that she would never care for him any

more than she did now. These things made no difference. Nothing made any difference.

At last, one day, his endurance gave way, and he spoke.

It was the evening, quite late. They had been walking on the *digue*, and had gone into the balcony of the Villa Mimosa to rest before Juliet and Mrs Belmont walked back to their hotel. Mrs Belmont had gone into the *salon* to look at some books that were lying on the table. Juliet sat down in the balcony among the flowers, and Mannering stood by her. It was a dark night, but it was not dark here, for all the *digue* was brilliantly lit, being still full of late promenaders.

They had been talking about the neighbouring villages before Mrs Belmont went into the room, and Nieuport had been

mentioned. Juliet was sitting quietly, apparently turning something over in her mind, when suddenly she said,—

“Nieuport—what is the association with that place? Ah!” she cried quickly, looking up at him, “it was there—” and then she stopped.

“Yes,” said Mannering, who followed her thought, “it was there that duel was fought. Did you not know it was near here?”

“No,” said Juliet, “if I knew it at the time, I forgot it. I was so agitated.”

“Yes,” said Mannering, with unnatural quietness. “You loved Maurice Denvil?”

She answered as if speaking to herself, without any thought of wounding him.

“My heart died with him. It beats still, of course; but it has no life. I would sooner be dead altogether than live as I do now!”

Mannering ground his heel on the stone floor of the balcony. Juliet's ear caught the harsh sound, and she looked quickly up. Her face blanched at the sight of his, full of passion, altered by emotion.

“What is it?” she exclaimed—and then, as he turned towards her and she met his eyes, she put up her hand and cried,—  
“No, no! don't speak! Don't spoil what we have! Let us be friends!”

“I have tried,” said Mannering, desperately, “and it is impossible. Nothing that has happened, no change in yourself, can change me. I want you for my own, for my wife. Listen, Juliet—listen to me! You say your heart is dead—that love is impossible—come to me without love—I do not ask for it, I no longer hope for it—I know I cannot win it from you. But let me love you! I must! I may be of some use in my gen-

eration if I can have your presence in my life, even if I must forever be without your love. Without you altogether I become a hopeless misanthrope, hating the world. I want you to look at, to watch, to listen to, to inspire me. No one else interests me, or helps the hours to pass. I don't ask you for any love—only to be my friend and companion.”

“As we are now, yes.”

“No—not as we are now. As my wife. I want the right to be with you always, to protect you from this mean world, which has sufficiently hurt your beautiful spirit. I want your help, the inspiration of your thought, in all my life.”

“And it would make you happy to have these, without love?” said Juliet, wonderingly.

She could not understand him. He bent towards her a face that was white

and quivering with emotion. No one living had ever seen Mannering like this.

“Happy!” he said, “it would be joy unutterable! For you cannot prevent my loving you!”

Something within her, something hard that lay at the core of her heart, seemed to soften and melt as he said this. Was it possible that she still had the power to give joy to a true, strong soul like this? Even if the power of joy were dead forever within herself, was it not something to give it to another who was worthy of it? Sudden, hot tears came into her eyes; she put out her hand to him. He caught it and held it fast in both his own. It was to him like taking a beautiful bird into safety, that had long fluttered alone among storms and tempests, and soared over dangerous seas.

And so it happened that Juliet Vane

never returned to the stage after that season ; and when she reappeared in London, it was as the Countess of Mannering.

Mannering had won the prize of his life ; for his love was of that order that he could say with Sappho, "That man seems to me peer of gods, who sits in thy presence and hears close to him thy sweet speech and lovely laughter."

For Juliet the "fire eternal" was extinguished ; she could not give love, but she could give the light of her presence and the sweetness of her spirit.

She is at peace ; and her life is full of activity. But there is one terrible, living ghost that haunts her path, which can never be laid. This is a woman whom she sometimes meets in the Park, sometimes sees at the theatre ; and the eyes of that woman fasten on her with a look which says, "You have made me what I

am." None else guess at the dreadful message which passes between these two; no one knows why Lady Mannering turns pale and trembles when she encounters a haggard woman, rouged, beautifully dressed, covered with diamonds, but worn and wild-eyed. This restless creature, with her continual laughter, almost weird in its fictitious gaiety, is the wreck of Linda Raymond

THE END.









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